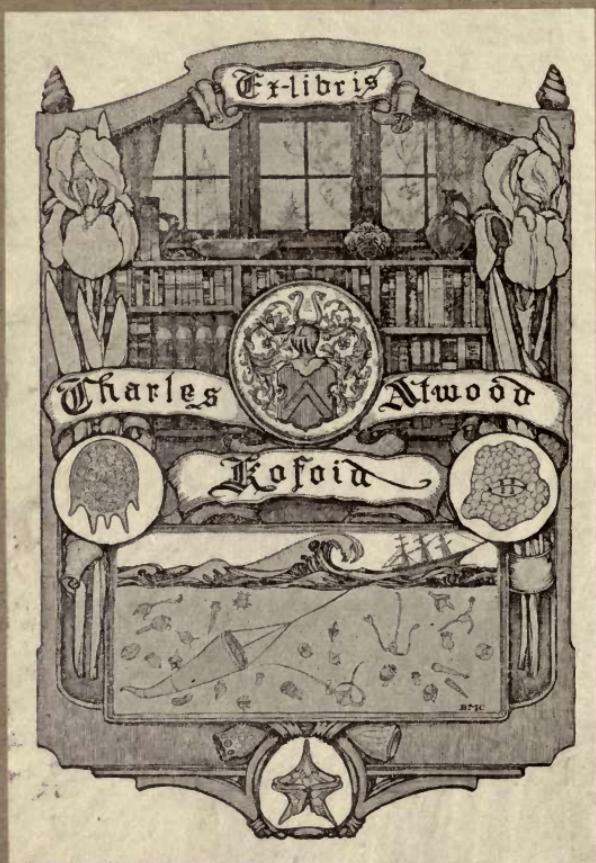


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to the Management of
Rabbits, and Mice.



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PET RABBITS, CAVIES AND MICE.

A COMPLETE HANDBOOK TO THE
PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THESE
—DOMESTIC FAVOURITES.—

BY
GEORGE GARDNER.

—
MANY ILLUSTRATIONS.
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PREFACE.

The object of the Author of "Pet Rabbits, Cavies, and Mice" has been to provide in simple, handy form a Complete Manual for the tyro who is contemplating "taking up" the keeping of any of these furry favourites as a hobby. The various diseases to which they are subject are more or less fully dealt with, and the aspect of profit in their cultivation is not lost sight of. The Exhibition side of the hobby is also touched on, and amateur fur fanciers will read with pleasure and profit to themselves Mr. GARDNER's lucid and practical observations—based on a life-time's active association with the various hobbies as Judge, Expert, and Fancy Journalist.

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CHAPTER I.

RABBITS.

HOUSING.

THE housing of live stock of any kind depends largely, in arrangement, upon the space at disposal. Rabbits especially need plenty of fresh air, although there is one variety of these animals which it is urged cannot be bred to perfection without being kept in such an equal temperature as can never be obtained under natural conditions. That variety is the lop-eared rabbit, about which we shall give special directions. We favour outdoor hutches properly protected from the weather, i.e., kept dry. The nature of the rabbit is such that it can bear very cold weather, and take no hurt, if it is kept dry and free from draughty conditions. Dampness of its dwelling place or draughtiness will soon prove fatal. Against a fairly high wall, with a waterproof roof over the hutches, wide enough to prevent rain or snow from beating or drifting under is a good place, affording fresh air in plenty and also providing shelter for the rabbits and those who attend to them in inclement weather. Hutches should always be stacked well clear of the ground—say 2 feet, and should also be kept the same distance from the roof, as well as standing a little away from the wall, and with air space between each. This will give opportunity for a continual current of fresh air to get all round them, and is a great help towards retaining dry and healthy surroundings. Many of those who keep rabbits have either what are called sheds or out-houses at their disposal. Some have stables, others lofts over the same. Others, who go in for rabbit keeping as a business as well as a pastime, have rabbitries specially constructed. No matter which course is followed, we favour plenty of light and cheerful conditions, and Nature demands a liberal supply of ventilation to permit of the ingress of fresh air and the egress of foul, to and from any building in which rabbits

are kept. If kept out-of-doors under a roof, open at the front, it will be advisable to try and choose a place where the most stormy weather conditions can be avoided; and measures must be taken to protect the hutch fronts from the beating of rain in winter or the fierce rays of the sun in summer. The size of the hutches in which rabbits are kept, depends upon the variety selected. There are exceptions. Generally speaking a box about 2ft. 6in. long by 20 inches from back to front, and 18 inches high will be ample for a single rabbit. Of course if breeding is engaged in, the hutch should be quite eighteen inches longer, and that will give room for a bed or place for kindling to be parted off. The varieties needing larger hutches are Belgian hares, which must have plenty of room, or it impedes the attainment of many special points of excellence, such as length of limbs and general raciness. Any reasonable expenditure of hutch room will not be lost on this variety. We have known some breeders give Belgian hares the run of a loft, and the results, so far as length, style, and raciness of the animal are concerned, have been marvellous, especially amongst growing young stock. Flemish Giants, which ought never to be less than 11lbs. to 13lbs. in weight to satisfy the standard, must have large hutches. Angoras, too, need a hutch quite 3 feet long, with additional length for breeding purposes. It is not the height that affects so much, provided there is space on the floor of the hutch. English are another kind that need a little larger hutch than the smaller breeds, such as Dutch and Silvers. We would like to emphasise, on the question of housing, that no matter whether rabbits are kept outdoors or in, the single hutch or stacks of hutches should always be so placed as to provide for an air-current all round them, while being kept religiously free from draught. Hutches are easily made. A box of the size required can be fitted with a front by the amateur carpenter in a very short time. Of course some prefer joiner-made hutches of uniform pattern, elaborately finished, but that is not absolutely necessary. That is more for appearance than utility. If the rabbits are kept indoors, the hutch fronts can be made more open than those out-of-doors. That means a more liberal use of wire netting. But whether kept out-of-doors or in, narrow mesh (say about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) netting is always best, as it

protects the rabbits from cats, rats, or similar animals. The bedding of rabbits of any breed is a very important matter, and comes under the category of housing. Pitch-pine sawdust is best for scattering on the floors of hutches, and if that is not procurable, then any other kind of white sawdust will do. The object of this is sweetness and dryness. Sawdust has deodorent qualities, and it is dry. Further, it absorbs the moisture of urine, etc., and keeps rabbits dry footed and clean coated. We may call attention to a very important matter here, as regards exhibition varieties. If rabbits are allowed to move about in the moisture of their own creating, the fur at the hocks and haunches will gradually turn brown or rusty, and this is a great fault in the show pen. Sawdust goes far to prevent this. And further, it is easier to clean rabbit hutches out when the floors are kept covered with sawdust bedding. The cleaning process should be engaged in at least once a week. Twice would be better. And in the season when there is a plentiful supply of succulent green food, we keep a suitable shovel and take out the urine-saturated sawdust every morning. It spells comfort to the animals and sweeter surroundings to those who come in contact with the hutches. It is possible, with the use of sawdust bedding, care, and attention, to keep many rabbits so that visitors could not detect their presence. Over the sawdust, in winter, hay may be placed, or straw for the long-coated breeds. Hay will not do for these latter; it entangles in their fur and mats it. In providing boxes for hutches, it will give satisfaction to the eye if, when several are in use, they are all selected of the same size and pattern. Uniformity (although we humbly confess we did not practice it, but felt that the quality of the stock inside the hutches was of more importance than the outside appearance of the boxes) is of considerable effect to the visitor. We have had more than one, or one dozen, prize winners housed in sugar boxes, fitted up by the expenditure of a little labour. We have, on the other hand, seen almost palatial rabbitries, the floors of which have been almost holy ground to their owners, and even then have cast our thoughts back to the contents of our sugar boxes, and been easy in mind as to results at the coming shows. For all that, we never discourage the expenditure of a little money, or of

thought or labour on a rabbitry or hutches, because it must tend to the comfort of the animals, which we love. Some fanciers favour conditions of semi-darkness for rabbits, as they say that certain varieties can only be got to perfection under such conditions. Be that as it may, we prefer cheerful conditions, with light and air. Who is it that thinks a rabbit does not enjoy the sunshine? Let them watch a litter of young rabbits basking in it. No doubt sun, in its fierceness, does bleach the colour, but the rabbit keeper can provide light and cheerfulness without allowing the full glare of the sun to play on the rabbits.

FEEDING.

The rural and primitive way of feeding rabbits was very simple. In our boyhood it used to be bran and oats and green food, with a little hay. The same rôle can be pursued now with equal safety and success in the case of a pet rabbit. But with exhibition stock the procedure is altered. And even then systems differ widely, so that it will be well if we just let a few of the breeders of different varieties speak for themselves on the subject. It will do no harm, and will not destroy the idea, if we give our own in brief. It is as follows:— Morning feed, green food. Cauliflower leaves (if obtainable); failing these, and always when procurable, tares, vetches, or clover, green, but dry. All green food must be given dry to ensure safety to the rabbits. We emphasize tares, vetches, and clover, because they are so valuable. Our young stock always thrive twice as well when this green food is plentiful. Men bring it round, in London, in carts, and sell it at about 2d. a bundle. Failing either cauliflower leaves, tares, vetches, or clover, we give carrots or swedes; or, if obtainable, chicory or a little dandelion occasionally. Cabbage leaves we try and avoid, if possible. They are coarse and often purging. We have used water in preference. Some people use water regularly in the hot weather. Milk is a good thing to use in a rabbitry, but it is best to sterilize it first by boiling, as there can be no doubt this process destroys all risk of disease, or the introduction of parasites, such as worms. Generally, for exhibition stock, milk is a good conditioner and materially improves the gloss on the coat. In feeding

Belgian Hares many breeders give meal mashes in the morning. A splendid tonic, and one that well rewards the outlay on Belgian Hares for example, is a mash of equal parts barley meal and toppings, or pollard. To this add a little soaked oil cake, and some boiled linseed that has stood and got cold. Only sufficient to make the food crumbly moist is needed. A good plan is to soak the whole linseed for a few hours in cold water and then boil it. Result, when cold, a thick jelly. Give this, mixed with meal and cake, about two mornings a week. The rabbits will enjoy it and marvellous results in flesh and glossiness of coat will ensue. Such a mixture acts as a fine pick-me-up and builder-up of rabbits of any breed. Speaking of the mode of feeding Silver Greys, Mr. A. Brazier, a long time breeder of the variety says:—"This is entirely a matter which must be decided by the locality in which one lives. The great thing is discretion as to how it is given. Almost any green food will do, so long as it is fresh and shows no sign of decay in any part. But one great thing to observe is—always let the rabbits be supplied with good sweet meadow hay, so that they can pick up a bit of something sweet, and that will often counteract any ill-effects that may have arisen through eating a bit of bad green stuff. The best green foods I can mention are chicory, dandelion, tares or veitches, comfrey, and hogweed in the spring; but living in London, where often the supply of green food is limited, I have even had to resort to onion leaves and radish tops, and all has gone well." We propose to append the views of other breeders on the subject of feeding, as this is a point of the utmost concern in rabbit keeping, and, after the maxim—"many men, many minds," so hints that are useful can be gathered from the "multitude of counsellors." It will be safe to take it for granted that the staple food used by one and all is good sound, heavy, clean, sweet oats, added to meadow and clover hay—the former for warmth in winter as well as food, and the latter as a capital food. Too much oversight cannot be expended on the condition and quality of the food supplied. Many condiments are employed, such as Spratt's Rabbit Food, Thorley's Spice, crushed oil cake, Rabena, etc., etc. But, after all, these are not staple foods, and that is what mostly concerns our purpose in

this chapter. Another point of interest in relation to feeding is the manner in which it is supplied to the stock. Some breeders are careless, and throw the food in in abundance, never removing the stale bits. That is a bad plan in any case, but especially if the hutches are not kept scrupulously clean and free from urine. Just imagine pieces of bread thrown in upon a filthy and wet hutch floor, and being allowed to saturate with filth! Next, imagine a hungry rabbit eating such! Bread crusts are a delightful change, and much enjoyed, but not when mildewed or soaked in excreta and urine! We have more frequently placed the oats on the floor than in food pans, but always took good care to see that the floor was dry and clean. It does not hurt a rabbit to search for an oat on a hutch floor. There are plenty of firms who manufacture and supply earthen and terracotta food troughs and water pans, and these are frequently advertised by those supplying such requisites in the rabbit, bird, and poultry world. It is astonishing how small a matter of concern this is to the breeder, whose chief aim is the quality of his food, cleanliness, and the high standard of his stock. Very few of the most successful breeders bother about effect either in hutches or fitments. Their primary study is perfection of their specimens. But you will never catch them napping over the quality of the food they give to their stock. In the matter of corn food a small percentage of wheat with the bulk of the oat supply is a help to exhibition stock; and in this connection, if a breeder happens to lose a rabbit by death, it is more satisfaction to know that such rabbit died fat than thin. Do not overfeed, but observe regularity both in quantity and times of giving it. Do not imagine that rabbits need nothing else but green food. Do not think they will thrive on oats alone. Do not be a crank, but let reason have her voice, and learn as much as you can from everyone who keeps a rabbit. On the subject of feeding Flemish Giants—and these want some feeding—Mr. W. Barton says:—"I feed twice a day—morning and evening—with oats and clover, and three times daily with green food of different varieties. I also give a meal mash three times a week." Speaking of the feeding of Himalayans, Mr. Hearnden says:—"After my long experience I do not find it essential to feed on soft food. I have always found good sound white Scotch

oats (42lbs. to the bushel) to which is added a small percentage of the best wheat, the only solid food required. To this I add plenty of chicory, dandelion, swedes, etc. I do not find carrots suitable for this variety when you are getting them ready for the show pen." In feeding English, Mr. T. F. Linley proceeds as follows:—"Green food in the morning, and whole oats and grey peas at night. Turnips, clover, cauliflower leaves, carrots, etc., when in season, and parsley. Give also plenty of sweet old hay." A very old and successful breeder of Dutch rabbits gives it as his opinion that the adults of this variety only require feeding once a day during the summer, but young stock and breeding does twice a day. In Winter, feed twice a day, but not with corn. Give green food or roots and a good handful of hay or clover in the morning; and in the evening corn and green food. As a change diet, give now and then, besides oats, a little wheat and barley, also a few grey peas that have been soaked for 24 hours. These are a fine pick-me-up. Soft food is unnecessary for Dutch, except about once a week. You don't want to get this variety too fat and big, as there is a standard weight limit, and most judges are dead against a big Dutch. Only give sufficient food for a meal. It is a bad plan to over-feed so as to have corn left in the feeding troughs. A drink of water in the hutches is always useful if not essential. It is not a bad plan to watch carefully the food your rabbits eat the most freely, and study that well. The above will give a good general idea of the modes of feeding and foods required. Miss Mabel Illingworth, who is the originator of the variety called "Imperials," once told us that, although her pets are a fairly short-coated variety, she used bran as part of her staple food. It was soaked and given mixed with oats. The usual green foods, most of which we have enumerated previously, were given. Our own view is against the use of bran in the case of any of the short-coated varieties that are intended for exhibition, and we do not favour the use either of turnips or turnip tops as a succulent food. Perhaps we have discussed the question of feeding at somewhat inordinate length for the space at command, but it is the channel through which success is often made or marred. One final word. See that all food is sweet and pure.

CHAPTER II.

BREEDING—HOW TO PROCEED.

In this chapter we propose to give general instructions, leaving the question of mating the different breeds to be dealt with in the chapters devoted to a description of the points of each. There are two ways of breeding rabbits, indeed all live stock. There is the systematic and there is the aimless. This remark applies with equal force even though the breeder does not mix the varieties but adheres rigidly to separate breeds. Of course the man who breeds ordinary cross-bred stock takes no note of system. All are the same to him; and he usually goes in for prettiness of colours and size of specimens. Sometimes his only aim is to keep a rabbit on purpose to "fatten for Christmas." In that case a cross between the Belgian Hare and Flemish Giant will suit his every purpose. He will get a large rabbit, and by the introduction of the Belgian cross get rid of a great deal of the offal which Flemish carry. But if he wants a pretty pet and a table rabbit combined, he cannot do better than select the English variety. And he will have this double speculative chance therefrom—he may possibly, even in his aimless mode of procedure, breed a show specimen. This is not to advise aimless breeding, but to try and find for him a variety that combines pleasure and profit with the additional off-chance of honour attaching. Mismarked Dutch, Himalayans, and Polish are very pretty as pets. Some like the beautiful long-coated Angora as a pet, but if you are going to breed these fleecy-coated rabbits you will have to brush their coats daily, never failing. Are you prepared for the labour, patience, and constant application? If not, do not keep them as pets, for neglect will transform them into miserable objects in a very short time. For the breeder for exhibition purposes there is no safer path than that of system. What do we mean by

system? Well, there are two well-recognized systems, either of which has been successful. The one is in-breeding, the other a watchful selection from time to time of the very choicest sires and dams, and those that are the most successful in the show pen. This latter plan draws somewhat heavily on the pocket. The first-named draws on the patience, perseverance, and thoughtfulness of the aspirant to fame. We feel bound to say, from experience, that there is far more pleasure to be derived from the one system than the other. In-breeding, as we understand it, is carried out thus:— Select a reliable strain. Procure a sire therefrom, or use the sire of the establisher. Have, say, three does, one of the same blood as the sire, and the others of well-known winning strains that have similar characteristics to the strain you select the sire from. Save the does from these matings, and select those containing the greatest average of points. Buy a young sire bred from the father of these youngsters by the man from whom you obtained the first mating. See that the rabbit is good in all points, and mate him to the does bred from the first two out-cross does. The best does from this cross mate to the grandfather, and probably you will breed a sire of your own. In this line we have kept on breeding for years without ever again introducing an outcross on the male side. Our plan, in case we needed a change for strength, has been to buy does that appeal to us as of similar characteristics to our own strain. We have observed of late signs of "trimming," or opportunism in the writings and utterances of some of the former advocates of in-breeding. In our view in-breeding is in no sense capable of the introduction of entirely foreign sires, the more especially because they happen to be winners. It is beside the point to say that particular breeds are so intermixed that it is hardly possible to get foreign blood, and to give that as a reason why it is still in-breeding if you buy as a sire a winner here and a winner there. We cannot conceive the force of the contention that the introduction of a sire here and a sire there as being the perpetuation of a strain. We call it opportunism. On this subject of in-breeding we have had long years of consistent practice, so much so, that we could almost forecast the results of this and that mating with exactness. But there are general rules

applicable to breeding, whether it be systematic or aimless. Health in both parents is greatly to be sought after, indeed should never be overlooked. Rabbits, when bred from, should never be less than 7 or 8 months old, always free from ailment, and in good coat. Never breed from unhealthy or moulty specimens; and always see that the rabbits are in good flesh, particularly the doe. Not too fat, but it takes a great deal out of a doe to rear a litter of young, and if she is in good health and condition so much the better for her family. In the matter of age for mating, some choose a young sire and an older doe, others the reverse, but great success has been achieved by breeders from mating young stock together. We have had excellent results from the mating of father and daughter, and even brother and sister. But on this point it is imperative that both should be as near perfect in points as possible, or you will perpetuate faults. If you are going to breed to a system you will have to keep a stud book, and register all your stock. These are general remarks on breeding. For all the short-coated varieties, such as Belgians, Dutch, Himalayans, Silvers, etc., we think the winter is the best time to breed. Cold favours shortness of coat. Heat induces length both of coat and ears. From the time of mating till the birth of the young 30 days usually elapse. Keep the does in hutches they have been used to, as shifting is likely to produce restlessness and disaster. Give a liberal but not an extravagant diet, and let them have plenty of hay bedding and cheerful conditions. Don't pry about on the eve of expectation of a litter. Milk is a good thing for does, and many breeders give does bread soaked in boiling milk a day or two before the litter is due. Does should never be without drink at this time, as they are very thirsty. It often prevents the doe destroying her young if she has a supply of drink at hand when giving birth to the litter. A plan of using foster does is adopted by large fanciers in the case of valuable varieties and does prone to give birth to large litters. Common does are procured due to kindle at the same time, and their young are destroyed, and those of the fancy varieties substituted. This plan often acts well. Sometimes it is a failure, for the does will not take the little strangers. Give plenty of green meat to a doe while rearing her family, and do

not stint the hay. It is surprising what a warm bed does for young rabbits, and you would be surprised also at the early age at which young rabbits commence to nibble the hay; which is beneficial. Young rabbits are perfectly blind when born, but their sight comes at about nine days old. Some leave the nest earlier than others, but at a month old they will run out and feed as heartily as the doe. They are very shy at first, and care is needed to avoid fright, for that often induces fits. We believe in separating the sexes at about twelve weeks old. We have known them left on their parents until four or five months old, but do not advise that plan generally. It is not well to breed more than twice a year from a doe, and she should be well and judiciously fed between the periods of breeding. Some breeders remove the young to a new hutch or "run." Others prefer removing the doe, arguing that the young do better for being left in their own quarters. The advantage of leaving the young a little longer with the doe is to avoid the danger of milk trouble with the doe. If taken away at six or seven weeks the doe is sometimes full of milk, and trouble often results. If the young are left longer, the milk supply gradually ceases, for does will not allow young to suckle longer than Nature dictates. One of the chief items in breeding is to take great care of the young rabbits. It is a mistake to think that they can be suddenly removed, fed "as usual" with the old stock, and then thrive. It is well to feed young stock liberally. Old stock generally only need corn once a day—young stock, just removed, need it twice. We are no strong advocates of mashes, but we do urge liberal treatment of young stock, and if the expenditure of a little milk or meal is needed, let it be incurred. Another matter that bothers the breeder is the weakling youngster. Unless of great value, we never trouble. It gets the "happy dispatch." Don't keep young rabbits too thick on the ground—give plenty of hutch room, or ill-health will result. Young rabbits are, when in health, what we may, vulgarly, call grubbers. Beware of this, and regulate their supply, especially of green food, or you will soon get diarrhoea amongst them. Young rabbits are sometimes pugnacious, and this must be watched for; moreover, those that look the most promising will be best singled

out, if you have hutch room. Whatever variety of the rabbit family you select as your hobby, to breed it to perfection you must proceed on certain well-defined principles. If you are breeding for colour, say, and wish to produce a sound black or blue, for instance, you must mate blacks and blues. No foreign colours can be introduced thereto without ill results. It is of no use trying to make black white. If you are breeding for shades, as in silvers, you will need to study the results of the use of a certain sire and certain dams, and proceed accordingly. You must think for yourselves, having had certain broad principles laid down for your guidance, but if you wish to deepen shade, you must use those sires or dams that produce the shades. We do not favour the generally accepted theory that colour is always obtained from the sire. It depends upon antecedents. To breed fancy rabbits successfully requires the application of brain power. The fault of many young fanciers is that their brains work too quickly, consequently they think they have acquired more knowledge in a few months than many older men have done in a lifetime. There is something besides knowledge—there is experience. Says an old and successful fancier:—"In breeding fancy stock there is that about it that can only be gained by absolute practical experience. You must inbreed to make headway; it is the sure road to success, whether it be in horses, cattle, dogs, poultry, or rabbits. It has to be done on common sense lines. It is not in mating certain relations together, but to correct faults. Study the points, and I don't care if you mate brother and sister."

We must now proceed to give a few hints on

EXHIBITING.

This is a branch of the fancier's curriculum which is of the greatest interest. It must not always be thought that the best specimens are shown to the best advantage. But it is quite certain that no matter how good a man's stock is, unless he can show it properly, he will often be worsted in the fray. "In the first place," says an old exhibitor, "don't overshadow your specimens, and don't forget that condition plays a very important part in the show pen. Most of the best rabbit

judges show a great preference for rabbits in condition, and you will often see a really good specimen with only a H.C. card simply because it is not shown in good condition. There is nothing more striking to a judge, when he has several rabbits on the table or basket, some in lovely coat and condition, others the reverse. The first-named are bound to catch his eye, and you will find it is always worth the little extra time and trouble expended on grooming and attention given to them. I know it is very tempting, when you have been lucky enough to get into the prize list several times. You are then anxious to have another try, but you must have a little consideration for the exhibits." Here are the words of another old, experienced, and successful breeder of silver greys:—"Exhibiting: When is it best to commence? Well, I should say at about five months old,—as soon as the rabbit is clean through its moult. I do think it an abomination to see a silver grey in the show pen with black ears and a big patch of black fur on its forehead. How can this be perfection? And in the young classes it is easy to tell within 14 days whether a rabbit is 5 or 6 months old! Although this time on would give a great advantage. But if a rabbit is carefully shown at 5 or 6 months old it will take no harm, but will live to a good old age. My practice is only one show a week, or if I am showing a buck, I do not use him at stud while the shows are on. Always be sure to show a rabbit in condition, i.e., with its coat well set. If this point is studied, the rabbit will not take much hurt. Very often the cause of trouble is sending rabbits out when in moult and the constitution is low. It is then that a rabbit contracts snuffles, and all sorts of trouble, which, perhaps, are never cured; whereas a little forethought would have prevented all this. If sent out in good condition a rabbit has a much better chance of catching the judge's eye." We do not propose to labour the point of necessity for rabbits being shown in good condition beyond giving these opinions of two breeders of some of the most popular varieties shown at the present day, in the case of the latter of which condition either makes or mars a rabbit's chances almost absolutely. Our next point is—when to begin showing. Our advice is that steps be taken to ascertain what is needed in the show pen before you commence to exhibit.

Do not place too high an estimate on your own stock. On the other hand, keep your eyes open hereabouts. Why? The answer is simple. If you have started with a good strain you may have bred something out of the common, and if you consult other fanciers they may sometimes be a little envious, just a little afraid lest you should beat them, and just a little—only a little, but watch for it—desirous of purchasing one from you “to cross in with theirs.” Often that “one” is a plum. We cast no reflection here, but it is just one touch of human nature as we have seen it in play in the years gone by. The “one” they want “to cross in” is usually the one you should exhibit. Mark that. But there are generally fanciers who will give you candid and honest advice, and won’t want to buy. If you desire to know what shows to exhibit at, you will find them advertised in the Fancy journals, to be bought at your newsagents. And a post card to the secretary of any show advertised will bring you a schedule in which all particulars will be found. Study that schedule well, and be careful how you fill it in. These are only extraneous matters, but they are important. Now we will deal with three or four points concerning preparation for exhibition. The first is training or handling. A wild rabbit on the basket is a great annoyance to a judge, and its chances are heavily handicapped thereby. Consequently we advise, most strongly, the fancier to handle his show rabbits frequently. Put up a stand near your rabbitry or in it. Lay a sack thereon, and take out your rabbits often and train them to sit as you would like to see them do when on the judging table. This gives the animals confidence, and enhances their chances of showing themselves to the best advantage. The next point is grooming. A good rabbit well groomed is a picture. Some fanciers groom one way, some another. Here is one way, and it shall suffice. Take a very small spot of castor oil and place it in the centre of one of your palms. Rub the hands together till all apparent traces of the oil have disappeared, and your hands shine. Then groom the rabbit’s fur with your hands till it glistens. This it will soon do. Be careful there is no oil, in substance, on your hands, or it will cause a “mess.” This treatment applies to all short-coated varieties. In the case of Angoras, they

must be brushed daily, whether on show or not, and for this purpose a proper hog's bristle brush should be obtained. They must be kept free from mats or tangles, or their chances are heavily handicapped. Another point: Feed exhibition stock well. Milk is useful. So is a little oil cake. So also is a mash made of linseed (boiled and let to stand and get cold) and equal parts barley meal and toppings. This thrice a week. Always let the rabbit feed before dispatching on a journey. Ours get a feed of oats and have a little green food and plenty of hay in the box or basket. Much has been written anent this question of rabbits travelling to and from exhibitions. A great deal—the major part—has been dictated by the most humane considerations. There can be no doubt that baskets are best in the summer, and boxes of ample size, and plentifully ventilated—at the proper points—in the winter. Common sense should enter at this door, and a box can be ventilated without being made draughty. Let either box or basket have secure straps or fastenings, and a proper handle at the top. Railway porters are too busy (sic) to lift a parcel (containing live or dead stock) carefully. They play bounce ball with some, football with others. Nobody sees them, and their hearts have no feeling for the dumb creation. This is from the experience of observation. Help these people, then, and give them no excuse. Night journeys are best if possible to far distant shows, but in any case sufficient time ought to be allowed in transit. When rabbits return from a show it is wise to give them an aperient. We know an old breeder who always gave his a Beecham's Pill. There is a sound idea here.



CHAPTER III.

THE DISEASES OF RABBITS.

WE shall commence this chapter with a reference to one of the ills or indispositions of the rabbit family which, although not an actual disease, is a very troublesome affliction to which one and all are periodically subject. To escape it means death. We refer to

THE MOULTING TIME.

Of all the periods in the existence of the rabbit covered by immunity from actual disease, the most troublesome is the period during which it is shedding its old coat and putting on a new one. There is a dullness and listlessness about the animal which awakens sympathy. Much depends upon the rapidity with which the moult process proceeds. Some moult quickly and easily—the fur seems to come off in profusion; others moult steadily and stubbornly, and take a very long time in getting through. We favour a daily and continual assistance in the shape of grooming out the old fur, the administration of judicious aperients to keep the system clear, such as fluid magnesia in milk, and nourishing food. If ever soft food (i.e., mashes) are useful it is at this period. And the hutches shou'd be kept scrupulously clean. We have found it wise to groom the rabbit's old coat out by the aid of a very small portion of glycerine on the hands. Warm bedding is essential, and quietude. Never breed from or exhibit a rabbit at this period; watch carefully the quality of the green food or roots given; and don't shift a rabbit from one hutch to another during moult.

Of the diseases proper to which rabbits are subject

DIARRHŒA, OR SCOURS,

is very prevalent. It is a deadly enemy to young stock, for when once set up it often causes the rabbit to be in such a miserable condition that it cannot be prevailed upon either to eat or drink. One of the most pitiable

objects is a young rabbit with scours. It sets its back and its fur up, sits absolutely dejected, and refuses food or drink. Death in the majority of cases terminates its suffering. It is often difficult to trace the origin of scours. Young rabbits, amongst which it the more frequently occurs, are much more ravenous than adults, and they will search about for every atom of food. Often they pick up a bit of stale food or green meat, accidentally overlooked. Sometimes the hot weather will send them off. Often overcrowding or fright will do it. If you can, in the early stages of the attack, get them to drink plenty of cold water, it will relieve and often cure them. A very large breeder recently told us that he battled successfully with an attack of scours in some valuable young Belgian Hares. He could not trace its origin, except to the hot weather and a liberal supply of greenfood. But he tried as a last resort brandy and raw eggs. That was successful. If so in young stock, it may well be tried with adults. In any case diarrhoea demands prompt treatment. Our advice is to visit a chemist and ask him to mix the proper quantities of an antidote for the complaint. But if we can get adult rabbits, or young stock, to drink plenty of cold water, we seldom need to go further. Some recommend chlorodyne, others arrowroot, etc. But it is best to watch your food supply carefully, and avoid wet or stale food—either green or otherwise.

INFLAMMATION

Is often a natural corollary to scours. The latter very frequently develops into inflammation of the bowels, and when it does hardly any power or skill on earth can combat it. You cannot deal with a rabbit like you can with a human patient, and the treatment which might be adopted to allay scours needs to be materially altered when inflammation has to be dealt with. This, of course, has reference to inflammation of the bowels in its acute form as a result of diarrhoea. Mustard leaves, etc., cannot be applied to rabbits, and often the administration of medicine induces so much exhaustion as to do more harm than good. Inflammation of the lungs, proceeding from cold is equally fatal, and up to the present time this disease has defied most of the attempts to

battle with it successfully. We have no remedy to offer. But it will perhaps aid in prevention to point out that constant attention to the food supply and to the conditions of housing will go far to secure immunity from attacks of this deadly foe of the rabbit.

COSTIVENESS,

Or Constipation, to be more scientifically accurate, is the very opposite of diarrhoea, and arises as much from a shortened supply of green food as diarrhoea does from plenty. It is not to be concluded, however, that constipation always springs from lack of aperient food, although it does in the majority of cases. Some people who keeps rabbits professedly as pets are superlatively ignorant of the animals' needs. So ignorant that they often diet their pets in the most ridiculous fashion. They would laugh at you if you told them a rabbit drank water. And to allege that green food is necessary daily would afford them food for ridicule. Such people are more fitting to keep wooden horses than rabbits. You can easily detect the presence of constipation by the lack of excreta. There will be plenty of this daily from a healthy rabbit, and it will be firm and natural. Anyone knows the natural excreta of a rabbit. If the animal is suffering from constipation it will show some of the same mopishness present in the case of diarrhoea, without the weakness, but there is here also a strong tendency to inflammation. If the costiveness can be relieved by a mild and frequent aperient, that will be better than castor oil, which is reactive. Some advise syrup of buckthorn. It is good. Others like strong doses of magnesia, but we have learnt from experience that this and many other of the ills from which rabbits suffer may be prevented by common sense feeding. There are change foods in green meat such as chicory, dandelion, etc., which work wonders in this way. But the crass obstinacy of many rabbit keepers causes them to persist in the unwise policy of closing the stable door when the horse has escaped.

DISEASES OF THE SKIN

Arise chiefly from overheated blood and unclean conditions. We do not prescribe for these beyond the

supply of cooling medicine and the blood purifying of green foods, such as dandelion, etc. Rabbits with skin affection, if malignant, are best underground. If the attacks are insignificant, they are easily dealt with as above, but skin diseases are usually troublesome and obstinate.

INCURABLE DISEASES,

Such as paralysis, fits, and the like, are often met with, but time spent on attempts at a cure is wasted. We never met with a case of cure of paralysis, and might say the same of fits. It is no kindness to any person or his rabbits for those who have the experience to be recommending measures for the prolongation of life in the cases of affections for which there is no cure. There is another disease in which attempts to cure result in failure in nine cases out of ten. That is what is called "Slobbers." The affected rabbit discharges a kind of spittle from the mouth which saturates the fur around, and makes the rabbit look miserable. Overcrowding, indigestion, injudicious feeding are the primary causes. It is a summer visitant generally, and the recovery is so rare, especially in adult rabbits, that all the "cures" have gone by the board. Rabbits suffering from slobbers will not eat or drink, and as in the case of diarrhoea have to be drenched or left alone. To prescribe boiled milk, specialist food, or drugs seems wide of the mark. There is as much likelihood of recovery if left to the ordinary diet as there is to special treatment. The percentage of cures is very low even from special treatment.

TUMOURS, CANKERED EAR, AND BLINDNESS.

The two former are capable of relief and cure. The latter never. Often in the case of a tumour it can safely be opened by anyone skilled and confident in the use of a knife, and when all the pus has been ejected, the cavity can be well cleansed by the free use of an antiseptic such as Condy's fluid or boracic acid solution, or anything of that nature. The great point is to keep the wound open long enough to allow of its healing from the bottom. See closely to this, as mischief arises if the cavity heals first from the top. An injury will

cause a tumour. The diet at this time should be good, but not such as to heat the system. Cankered ear is very often met with, and causes the rabbit much annoyance. The itching is intense, and the soreness of the head bad to bear. Besides, it is a nasty complaint. Take a piece of wadding on a stick (taking care it cannot slip off), dip in warm water, and thoroughly cleanse the ear. Having done this, go to a chemist, and he will mix you a fluid at a small cost to drop into the ear. We have a lotion, given us by a veterinary surgeon for canker in the ears of dogs, but we know not of what it is made, and like a man of science our vet. will not tell us. One thing can safely be done. Magnesia, cream of tartar, or any other blood purifying medicine may be given in the food. A splendid remedy for this and other blood diseases is equal parts of sulphur (the best the chemist supplies) and cream of tartar, mixed in milk, and given, say half a teaspoonful twice or thrice a week. Ointment may be all very well for canker in the ear, but it is difficult to get it down deep enough. The same objection does not lie against liquid applications. Sore hocks are also a bad form of skin disease. They proceed from a dirty hutch. Bad cases are hard to cure, and if the rabbit is not valuable, kill it.

WIND, DISTENTION OF THE STOMACH, OR COLIC.

Is a very painful complaint, the cause of indescribable misery to a rabbit until relieved. It is the bosom friend of indigestion, and where a rabbit is at all costive, there is certain to be trouble in the direction indicated. We do not think strong purgatives are very effective in cases of wind or colic. Some do. It is necessary to preserve nominally free action of the bowels, but wind proceeds from causes almost intimately connected with the digestion and food supplied. At least, that is our experience. Regular feeding on a discriminating and pure diet is a great preventive of wind or colic in rabbits. It is somewhat as in the case of human beings. Caution prevents; carelessness induces. Anything that will promote a normal action of the liver will help to secure freedom from wind and colic. Costiveness is the friend of wind, but that is not to say that laxness is absolutely essential.

SNUFFLES.

No rabbit book would be complete without a reference to this filthy disease. There is no need for a fancier who knows anything, to ask if you have got snuffles amongst your stock. He detects it as soon as he comes on the premises. There is sneezing here, coughing there, and a sight of the mucous-stuffed nostrils and dirty fore feet of the affected specimens only confirms what the sneezing and coughing had indicated. There are as many views on the cause of snuffles as there are opinions upon its incurable nature or otherwise. We have only one opinion, and that is akin to our view upon septic fever in birds. Once it has obtained a footing it is incurable. Cleanliness, care, proper ventilation, and freedom from draughts and dampness are the best preventives. Some allege that it is not contagious. We are of the contrary view. We think it both infectious and contagious, and have proved that it is hereditary. But we have done with testing and proving, with doctoring and hoping; once we are convinced we have a case of snuffles, we protect ourselves and our other specimens by killing the affected rabbit. A ruffled coat, an emaciated frame, a filthy nose, and altogether an object of pity is met with in a rabbit with snuffles. If you get one, kill it, for pity's sake. Let those experiment who will. We have tried remedies, and recommended their trial. We have heard of "cures," but never met with one in our personal experience. We write for ourselves, of our own knowledge, with no axe to grind, or medicine to boom. We say "Kill." Further, we are of opinion that the man who knowingly exhibits a rabbit with snuffles is no fancier, no gentleman. Let him keep his filth at home.

KEEPING RABBITS FOR PROFIT.

Anyone who keeps a single rabbit in a sugar box for the children's delight, or out of the love of his own heart for dumb creatures, does not dream of profit. With him it is a hobby, and to tend to it is a labour of love. But there are many sides to rabbit keeping, and one of them is—can they afford delight as a hobby, and

be made to pay into the bargain? The answer is—Certainly. Since we last wrote upon this subject much has happened. There is no American market open, through which rabbits can be disposed of at such fabulous prices as £25, £30, and even £55 (the top figure ever realised). But recently we have come across a case in which £17 was paid in one show for two young rabbits, and £5, £6, £10, and even £20 is no unusual price paid in England to-day for good specimens. These are fancy prices, but actually realized. It is not on this ground alone that we say rabbits can be made to pay. Let us take more modest premises. Our book has not to do with rabbit farming. But we have in our mind the owner of a stud of well bred and carefully selected rabbits, and we say he can realize the pleasure of a hobby, and make that hobby pay into the bargain. How? In this way. To begin with there is always a market—the food market for his wastrels, and this, in a stock of any size will go far to cover the food bill. Then there are the sales of the breeders at prices sometimes of 7s. 6d., 10s., and £1 each. Added to these are the show specimens. One of the best ways to keep the thing going is to be continually weeding out. Never keep a lot of old, used-up does and bucks. They eat their heads off and bring no return. It is of no use our telling fairy tales on such a practical subject. To make rabbits pay, a great deal of energy, plenty of perseverance, advertising, showing, and winning need to be done. It will not pay to give high prices for pedigree stock in order to sell the produce at food market price. What you need is to get the best, work upon a principle in breeding, and seize the opportunity for disposal when it offers itself. Exhibiting of itself hardly ever pays after all the outgoings are reckoned. But exhibiting brings renown, and people buy anything on the strength of renown! The country dweller has far better chances than the one who lives in a large town. Food is cheaper. In the country it costs little or nothing for green food or bedding. In the town these are strong items in the expenditure. And yet we have known men in towns make a nice profit out of their rabbits. Not long since we heard a popular judge say he could make more by breeding, buying, and selling, than he did by judging, etc., if he gave up the one and took to the

other. We always call to mind our own personal experience when touching upon this subject. The thing necessary is to use great care in selection, to buy well, feed properly, house comfortably, and sell at the right moment. These are general directions, but they cover the whole range of possibility in this matter. If you want to succeed you must buy healthy stock and keep it healthy. If you want to succeed, you must buy of the reputable breeder. Of course, you will not be an expert at starting, and that is why you need to buy of a reputable breeder. There are always men in every branch of life who are on the look out for "pigeons" to pluck. These are the people who are the fester spots of the rabbit as of any other fancy. But they are not legion, and the channels of purification, protection, and publicity are so manifestly increasing in numbers and potency, that there is a daily improving chance for the true hobbyist to take up the rabbit fancy and make it pay its way. After all, an asset in rabbit keeping is the pleasure it affords, and if every 20s. expended does not return 25s., but only 20s., or even 19s., that is no argument that rabbit keeping does not pay.



CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCIPAL VARIETIES.

THE BELGIAN HARE.

A great deal can be written in praise of an animal, which may also be described in a few sentences. Colour, style, and length of body and limbs are the three essential characteristics of the modern Belgian Hare rabbit. For many years the lop-eared rabbit held sway, but premier position was gradually wrested from it by the Belgian Hare. This member of the rabbit family has brought some remarkable prices. Some few years ago the Americans conceived a liking for the Belgian Hare, and they went for it for all they were worth. Many an English breeder reaped a rich harvest by sales to the Yankees, and prices varying from £5 to £50 fairly represent the figures touched in this remarkable craze. All that, however, is but ancient history, and many good specimens are now sold for as many shillings as they would have fetched pounds in the years when Uncle Sam was a-hobbying. Notwithstanding the exhaustion of the American demand, high prices are now commanded for good specimens, and the Belgian Hare is about as profitable to keep as any of the fancy varieties. They came from Belgium in the first instance, but have been quite transformed in appearance by English breeders, and competition at the Crystal Palace and other shows is tremendously keen. We shall endeavour to give a description of the several points of a Belgian Hare, as we see them. First, then we will take colour. Belgians vary somewhat in point of ground colour, but there is no doubt that the most successful, most popular, and most fascinating colour is the rich and brilliant golden tan. Not yellow, washed out colour, but that with plenty of body and brightness

in it. This colour gives the animal a rich appearance. The Standard says "rufus red." Call it that if you will. The beauty of such a specimen is enhanced by the presence of dark hairs in the fur, distributed wavily over the body. This is called wavy ticking, and is greatly sought after by the best breeders and judges. Strange to relate, however, notwithstanding the high merit which attaches to a golden tanned rabbit with wavy ticking, the number to be met with is not at all commensurate with the value of the specimens possessing it. The reason is not far to seek. Wavy ticking in the golden tan is extremely difficult to get, especially in bucks, and it is a somewhat rare experience to come across one possessing such a point of excellence in a pronounced manner. Most of the golden tan bucks are plainly, or what the Fancy calls evenly, ticked. Next in importance comes length of body and limbs. Unless this characteristic is pronounced the specimen stands little chance of success in a show to-day. A short, stumpy specimen is soon passed over. Some of the lithe and fine boned Belgians present the appearance of a whippet dog in general build of body and limbs. The fore legs should be long, fine in bone, beautifully clear in the tan, and pointed at the foot. To see a Belgian with a spreading foot is but to do so to condemn it. The hind feet should be long and rich and deep in the tanning, the toes also being finely pointed—not spreading; and many breeders and exhibitors, either justifiably or to the contrary, remove the white fur to be found under the feet and between the toes, as it quite spoils the outline of tan colour. How they remove it may be left to their discretion, but it is certain it is done. A good sound tan chest, utterly free from dark hairs is a point of excellence. So is a well carried pair of ears, with rich and distinct lacing—or a black rim which runs for a couple of inches along the tips of the ears. The proper carriage of the ears is semi-erect. They should be well covered with rich tan fur, and be about five inches in length. Bad carriage of ears in a Belgian Hare is a defect. Shape is also a very great point in a Belgian. Some allude to it as "style." We like to see a long, thin body, which, when drawn out will, as we have said, resemble the whippet dog. The flank should be well tucked up, the

back nicely arched to a slight degree, the loins should be well rounded, and across the shoulders the specimen should be narrow, and show as much length as possible from the flank to the shoulder. Fanciers are very partial to a long lean head in a Belgian Hare, particularly in a buck, and a most objectionable feature is a short, stumpy, thick head. Many of the most successful youngsters fail in this respect when they reach the adult stage of their existence. Another point which we think should be emphasized to-day is the necessity for a straight tail. We know not who is responsible for the state of things prevailing, but it really exists, and it is necessary in a modern book of this kind to call attention to it. More frequently than is pleasant, a judge is met with exhibits carrying their tails on one side. If there is a distinct screw or twist in the tail it will run to side and curl inwards at the point. Besides, it can be distinctly felt, like a child with curvature of the spine. But the majority stop short at side carriage, without the screw. This side carriage is a great eyesore, and a distinct blemish on the rabbit's outline. Unfortunately judges are not agreed upon the weight to be placed on this disadvantage. Some view it lightly, others more seriously. But none go so far as to take definite and severe notice of it. This is a pity, as vigorous and united judicial action would soon settle the matter, for in point of demerit, there is but the difference 'twixt tweedledum and tweedledee in a screw tail and a tail "carried on one side." Nothing adds to the fire and raciness of a good Belgian Hare more than a bold, wild, hazel eye, which looks as if it were starting out of its socket. This gives to the animal a wild, hare-like appearance. Another eyesore is a dewlap, or pouch under the chin. The standard weight of a show specimen is put down at 8 lbs, but we leave that matter, as we are of opinion that not one in 20 reaches it, and might be handicapped adversely if they did. Let your Belgian Hare be healthy—not fat and podgy, and with fur short, full and flying, when turned back. We must not overlook another defect in some of the young Belgians of the present day. We allude to barred or flaky fore-feet, i.e., feet with light, silvery bars across, just above the toes. A word as to mating. Some prefer a golden tan buck and a doe of deep rufus red colour, but both full

of harelike properties as to shape, length, head, etc. Others go on the theory (not always confirmed in practice, we will vouch) that colour proceeds from the male, and consequently breed from rufus red bucks and golden tan does. Both ways have resulted in success, but not always either the one or the other. Having said this much, we now append the standard of points of excellence of the National Belgian Hare Club:—

	Points
Colour—Rich rufus red (not dark smudgy colour), carried well down sides and hindquarters, and as little white on jaws as possible	... 20
Shape—Body long, thin, well tucked-up flank, and well ribbed-up, back slightly arched, loins well rounded, not choppy, head rather lengthy, muscular chest, tail straight, not screwed, and altogether of a racy appearance	20
Ticking—Rather wavy appearance and plentiful...	10
Ears—About five inches, thin, well laced on tips, and as far down outside edges as possible, good colour inside and outside, and well set on	... ... ... ... ... 10
Eye—Hazel colour, large, round, bright, and bold	10
Legs and Feet—Fore feet and legs long, straight, slender, well coloured, and free from white bars, hind feet well-coloured	... ... 10
Without dewlap	... ... ... ... 10
Size—About 8 lbs.	... ... ... ... 5
Condition—Perfectly healthy, not fat, but flesh firm like a racehorse, and a good quality of fur...	5
<hr/>	
Total ...	100

SILVERS

Are an interesting and profitable study. They afford gratification for numerous tastes as to colour and effect. Silvers are bred in hundreds in the North of England.

Lincoln, Blackburn, different parts of Yorkshire, Grimsby, and many other northern centres send out some of the best. In the county of Sussex also there are numerous breeders of Silvers, and, we say it without egotism, London and its suburbs have provided, and continue to provide some of the very best. One of the biggest winners in Silver Greys in the season of 1906 was bred in a London suburb, and we shall be excused a natural feeling of pride if we say that at the Crystal Palace Show in November, 1906, a gentleman who owned and bred the Challenge Cup young Grey of 1905, and the Challenge Cup adult doe of 1906, told us that from a doe of our own breeding sprang those and other winners he had exhibited since the purchase from ourselves. So that London takes a fairly prominent share in the production of the best Silvers. There are four sections for Silvers at shows, and each variety may be said to be bred quite separately, although in the cases of two there is undoubtedly a little judicious mixing resorted to. The sections are Greys (the most numerous); blues, which are scarcely ever seen now, and might almost as well be struck out of the list; Fawns; and Browns. It is only fair to give the most popular section precedence, therefore we commence with

THE SILVER GREY.

We could write much upon this variety, having bred hundreds, including many winners, and possessing at the present time several from which we have great hopes, including successful rabbits at a recent great Silver Club Show. But we shall give the views of a gentleman from whom we ourselves obtained our first stock many years ago. Mr. A. Brazier, of Galley Wood, Chelmsford, writes us thus on this subject:—“In my opinion the Grey of the Silver tribe is the most handsome as well as being as good as any variety a fancier can keep. It is beautiful for the exhibition table because the hand of the faker cannot very well in any way improve its beauty. There are no bad coloured patches to remove, no plucking or dyeing; in fact, no tricks can well be successfully played with exhibition Silver Greys; although I have seen the chests of Silver Greys that appeared to have been tampered with to



Mrs. A. BRAZIER'S SILVER GREY, CHAMPION "P.B."

remove the lightness of the fur which will sometimes come very much lighter at chest to the detriment of the specimen. This has had the appearance of giving the chest a dead or leaden appearance, and I am happy to say that such have been passed by the judges without a card. The Silver Grey cannot be made, it must be bred, and having a few years ago won many prizes, I think I am entitled to say that winners can be bred. My old Champion "P.B.," whose shadow graces these pages, won no fewer than 84 first and special prizes, a record which I do not think has been beaten by any rabbit." We desire to interrupt Mr. Brazier just for a moment to say that from Champion "P.B.," on the male side, we laid the foundation of our own stock, and had until recently in our possession "Storm King," who lived to be one of the oldest Silver Greys of our day—bred in direct male line (a grandson) of the old champion. So that Silver Greys are long-lived as well as beautiful, and in-breeding does not always destroy stamina. Mr. Brazier adds:—"Some letters have recently appeared in the Press—'Have Silver Greys improved?' How I wish I could again place upon the table some of those which have passed away, and compare notes. The Silver Greys of the old days were bred, not made, thus encouraging all breeders to strive to breed specimens of equal and superior merit to those of long ago. On one occasion I bred 6 in one litter, all of which turned out to be first prize winners in open competition, and three of which I sold for £21. So that they are profitable as well as fascinating. In breeding Silver Greys patience is required, and it is not well always to dispose of young Greys in a hurry, as very often they are not at their best until the second or third coat has grown. If you have a comparatively even young Silver Grey, always keep it if you have the hutch room, until the second moult at least. I have known such to turn out champions. In starting a strain of Silver Greys the great thing is selection. Do not rush and buy the first winner you see, just because it has won at a show, or someone (perhaps an interested party) tries to persuade you. Buy your stock from a well-known and genuine fancier who breeds his winners, and pay as good a price as your means will permit. Obtain all the facts from him as to parentage, and then set to work. Let the doe

be of the medium or between shade, and see that she is even from nose to tail, feet and chest and all. Look well to her being cobby in shape, with a short, full, springy coat (a most important point); and see that she is healthy and strong. Never overlook this! Let the buck be a good, even, dark shade, also of good shape and short coat, and healthy. From these, with care and watchfulness, a good strain may be built up. But I would like to emphasise this—with both parents see that the coats are short and crisp. Too much stress cannot be laid upon this point, for if you get the lovely full, short, sharp coat so much desired, the wavy ticking so much disliked will never be found. Nothing, to my mind, is so distasteful as a wavy ticked Silver Grey. Beware of a light chest, or blotches of white in the coats. These are bad faults. Much discussion has taken place as to the origin of the Silver Grey. When I first took up the breed, 25 years ago, it was pretty well determined that it originated in Lancashire, and when first brought out was known as ‘The Lancashire Sprig.’ As an all round rabbit for the table, combining fullness with quality of flesh, Silver Greys are hard to beat. They are small in bone, and fit for use at an early age. The does are fairly prolific, and excellent mothers if not interfered with. I hardly ever think of handling young Greys until they begin to put their heads out of the nests. I breed at any time of the year, so long as the parents are in full coat, and never mate them until they are 6 or 7 months old. If the Silver Grey is treated properly, it will always pay its way, and will satisfy the most fastidious, either as a pet, an exhibition rabbit, or for table purposes.” It will only be necessary to supplement the above with the concise statement that the Silver Grey section is divided into four parts, viz., the light, between, medium, and dark shades. With some present day judges the first two of these shades seem the most popular. If we ever had a preference it was for the dark shade, which we always found to be the most difficult to breed, but the most profitable for breeding purposes. The chief points of all on the show table are evenness, colour, and condition. The ground colour of the rabbit should be blue black; there should be as nearly as possible an equal mixture of light and dark hairs showing all over the body. The nose should

not be light, nor the tail dark. The dark hairs furnish the ticking, and the light ones the silvering. Too many silver hairs spoil the effect of a few dark ones, and make the rabbit too much of a self colour, and not bright enough. The weight of the rabbit should not exceed 5 lbs.; it should have neat ears, short and carried well up, and be a compact specimen all through, with a coat as bright and dazzling as may be. Here is the standard of points adopted by the Silver Rabbit Club:—

	Points
Under-colour—In Greys a rich, deep, blue black; in Fawns, a deep, bright, orange; in Browns a rich, deep chestnut 25	
Evenness of silvering throughout 20	
Sharp, even, bright ticking 15	
Short, full coat 15	
Ears, neat, and well set on, bold, bright eye ... 10	
Condition and shape 15	
	<hr/>
Total ... 100	<hr/>

THE SILVER FAWN.

A reference to the standard just quoted will show that the points of excellence are similar in almost every respect to those for the Silver Grey. The remarkably inexplicable fact about the Silver Fawn is that, notwithstanding its delicate beauty, it is not nearly so popular as the Silver Grey. But on many occasions in recent years it has managed to beat the Grey in the final tug of war for Champion honours. It did so at the Crystal Palace in 1906. We think wrongly, but it did so. A good Silver Fawn is a rabbit to be admired. Its cobby shape, neat perky appearance, small prick ears, and the tone of ground colour are alike aids to effect. To picture a Silver Fawn in the mind's eye one would have to take a rich, deep, and bright orange ground, and over that spread a gauze of silver hairs intermixed so as to diversify them equally with orange hairs similar to the

body colour. The lighter hairs form the silvering, the darker ones supply the ticking, just as is the case with light and dark in the Silver Grey. The effect is striking. The rabbit is sometimes badly silvered on face and cheeks; sometimes it fails in this respect on the feet and tail, and is too light round the eyes and along the jowl. There are in reality three shades of Silver Fawns, i.e., light, medium, and dark. Either is nice, but the light shade is the most delicate. A great point in the Fawn is evenness, and depth of undercolour; but they must have short, full, sharply flying coats, and neat ears. A Silver with big ears is badly handicapped; and in a Silver Fawn black hairs at the roots of the ears or on the forehead, as is sometimes seen, is a very great fault. In the competition for the Silver Cup at Tunbridge Wells in 1906 a Silver Fawn won over Greys and Browns. In breeding Silver Browns there is frequently a Fawn found in the litter. This indicates an intermixing of the two by breeders, and explains the presence of the dark and objectionable hairs at the ear roots. Silver Fawns are gradually growing in favour, but their beauty would seem to warrant an even more rapid advance in that direction.

THE SILVER BROWN

Is another charming variety of the same family. Not so delicate quite as the Fawn, it yet possesses a fine blending of tints. On the top it has a mixture of silver hairs and black ticking. If you disturb its coat you will find four distinct colours. The top, as noted, is silver and black hairs giving silvering and ticking; then comes a layer of deep, rich, bright chestnut fur; and then, lowest of all, a layer of a deep, rich, slate-like blue colour of fur. On no account should a Silver Brown show a blue shade of colour on top, when viewed from any position. It should always be a rich chestnut, varying in intensity from light to dark, and relieved by the black ticking which adds effect. One of the great faults in a Silver Brown is a dark beading or (as it is called in Belgian Hares, in which case it is of great value), ear lacing. This consists of a black rim round the tips of the ears for about an inch or two in length. The ears of a Silver Brown should be free from this,

although its origin would seem to make hard such a possibility, for there can be little doubt, from the ear beading and shape of many Silver Browns, that the Silver Fawn and the Belgian Hare are largely responsible for its origin. The composition of the fur colour of the —very often—when Brown is bred to Brown, a Fawn youngster is the result. And even the dark hairs found at the roots of the ears of some Fawns is a suspicious evidence of their parentage. The Silver Brown is a rabbit that takes some breeding to get it to perfection. It is not so popular as the Grey, but more fanciers are taking it up, and it is an exceedingly attractive and useful variety. Either it or the Fawn is a good table rabbit. Barred or light striped (across) fore feet are a great fault and a prevalent one in Silver Browns. They require to be evenly silvered all over, neat in ear (if you can get them), with good hind feet. Here there is always a difficulty. Both Browns and Fawns fail in hind feet more often than not. They are usually nearly white on the insides—a nasty fault.

DUTCH.

No doubt it will interest a few readers to know something of the origin of the Dutch rabbit. It came originally from Holland, where it is bred freely for marketable purposes, or as we should put it in modern phraseology—for food supply. Those bred in Holland for killing purposes, differ very much, of course, from the specimens we see in English shows, being much larger and longer in body, with long thin heads, and lacking that perfection of marking and beauty of fur the English exhibition specimen possesses. There are many sub-divisions exhibited, and all are bred true to shape and markings. It may be said that the one rule as to shape and markings applies to all the colours. It will be seen that the standard of points given explains the importance of the several points of marking as shown in our illustration. The most important part of Dutch rabbit breeding is the selection of breeding stock. On this the beginner will stand or fall. Indeed the same remark applies to all varieties in some degree, but more acutely to Dutch. Let him start right, and with

patience and perseverance the breeder is sure to be successful. Start wrong, and failure and disgust will soon follow. For this failure many who meet with it have only themselves to blame. The first attractive advertisement they read, of Mr. This or Mr. That offering does mated to champion sires at 10s. each decides their course of action. "Those are the sort. We shall soon breed winners," they say. But do they? In selecting breeding Dutch of whatever sub-division, make sure you get shape and pure colour to start with. A Dutch rabbit is cobby in shape, with short neat ears, and with eyes free from spots, and the iris matching the colour of the darker fur on the body, as near as may be. To anyone having preferences in the matter of colour, the Dutch rabbit affords a wide selection. There are blacks, blues, tortoiseshells, greys (steel and light), blue fawns, fawns or yellows, blue greys, etc. The best thing a breeder can do who desires to breed winners is to select one colour and stick to it. Many fanciers fail in Dutch breeding because they dabble in too many colours. The markings of a Dutch rabbit are uniform in all the colours. The Dutch Club standard lays the greatest stress upon face and stops. These score 30 points out of a possible 100. What is asked for is, first, a good blaze and even cheek markings. It must be explained that the ground colour of a Dutch rabbit is considered to be white, although in reality it is about half white and half coloured. The cheeks should be even, and the blaze (or white of wedge shape run up between); ears of the darker fur, and neat. The saddle is the line at which the coloured fur on the back part of the body joins the white. This should be even. The "cut" is the junction line of white and coloured fur on the belly, and the stops are the white portions of the hind feet and legs. These should be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, of white fur, and join the dark fur evenly all round. The cheek marks should be quite clear of the long hairs at the nose, called the smellers, but should not be cut too high up. Ears short and very neat. This is a general description. Whatever colour is selected, the dark fur should be as clear and pure as possible, and quite free from white. This variety gives rise to some cheating. Trimming, or fur extraction, is resorted to to secure evenness of marking, but the

critics are keen and the punishment sharp. Shortness of fur, freedom of eyes from spots, closeness of coat, and health are great points in a Dutch. To take the separate colours, we begin with

BLACKS AND BLUES.

These must be bred together, as to breed blacks to blacks is to invite rustiness, and blues to blues produces faded colour. Black is a deepener of blue in the results of mating, and blue of black. See that your blacks are of pure colour, free from white hairs in the ears or on the body, and devoid of a rusty or brown tinge. Look well to your blues also for purity. The iris of the eye should be of the same colour as the darker fur, and there should be no speck or mark on the eye except that which is natural. Look well after neat ears and cobby shape of body.

GREYS.

In competition in a class for Greys there are two shades—steel grey and light grey. The former are now firmly established, so that they can be safely bred together, but the black must be introduced now and again to retain the colour. What is wanted in a steel Grey is a nice, deep, even colour, with bright steel ticking, and a very short sharp coat. Many steels are too dark—nearly black on face and haunches. Light Greys are not nearly so numerous as Steels, and are of several different shades of colour. What is wanted is as distinct a Grey as possible without being too dark, because if you get these kind dark under, they are sure to be dark on top, but neither a light Grey nor a Steel, and some of them will be very dark on top with a nearly white belly. There are the Black Greys, which are easily mistaken for Blacks until closely examined. These frequently carry a brown tinge on the fur; and there are the Blue Greys. But they are off-colours, as the fancy terms them.

THE TORTOISESHELLS

Come next, and are one of the handsomest sections of the Dutch family. One prominent breeder remarked to

us quite recently :—“ I am afraid there are a good many who do not understand what a proper coloured tortoiseshell Dutch should be like—in the colour I mean. My idea of a good coloured tortoiseshell Dutch rabbit is that the dark fur should be of a nice bright fawn on the saddle, also on the face, with very dark slaty blue fur shading on the muzzle, and running round the edge of the cheeks up into the ears, which latter should be very dark. The shading should also run along the sides of the body and get darker as it reaches the hindquarters. The hind feet should be very dark in shading. It is a colour that is lasting.” Breed tortoiseshell bucks to black does bred from two tortoiseshells.

OFF-COLOURS.

It is not advisable to recommend the cultivation of these colours, although, strange to say, some of the best marked specimens are to be found amongst them. For the sake of definite colour, however, we discourage them. If fawns (or yellows), or blue greys, or blue fawns, are mixed with the standard colours, the result is deterioration of those established.

Here is the standard of excellence laid down by the United Kingdom Dutch Rabbit Club :—

Blaze and cheeks	...	...	...	15
Clean neck	...	...	...	10
Saddle	...	...	...	10
Undercut	...	...	...	10
Feet stops	...	...	...	15
Ears	...	...	...	10
Eyes	...	...	...	5
Colour	...	...	...	10
Size, shape, and condition	...	...	...	15
				—
				100
				—

Negative Points.

Small specks on eyes to lose 10 points; discoloured or wall eyes to lose 20 points; distinct spots or flesh

markings to lose 20 points; over 5½ lbs. in weight to lose 20 points.

THE OLD ENGLISH RABBIT.

Or as it is now called—dropping the ancient reference—the English, often alluded to as the “spotted one,” is a very beautiful creature, and is characterised by a splendid coat, and a charming diffusion of colour. The ground colour is pure white, and the marking points are saddle or run of darker fur down the centre of the back from neck to tail root; ears and tail of darker fur; nose dark in the shape of a butterfly with outstretched wings; a dark fur circle round each eye, as clean cut at the edges as possible—a point which most breeders seek after but few attain to perfection, so any aspirant to fame knows at least one ideal to aim at; the cheek spots consist of one on each cheek, as round and clean as possible, not to touch the eye circle; then there are the six belly spots—one clear spot on each teat; the leg spots consist of one on the outer part of each of the four legs, at the hock joint of the hind legs, and the shoulder joint of the fore legs. The chains and loins are represented by the spots along the rabbit’s sides, and should be as even on each as possible, made up of spots, well broken up, and quite clear of the saddle. A great point in an English rabbit, to make it perfect, is that the spots should be round and distinct, and not mere smudges running one into the other. The saddle should be continuous, as a broken saddle is a bad fault. The face of the rabbit should be perfectly white, except for the nose mark, the eye circles, and the cheek spots. There are several varieties, such as black and white, grey and white; blue and white, and tortoiseshell, or fawn and white with dark shading on the fawn. English have grown immensely popular of later years, and the breeders of the variety are now very numerous. Here is a piece of advice from a breeder of many prize winners including several champions. Mr. T. F. Linley, of West Hartlepool, says:—“First of all get three does and a buck from a well known breeder of the colour you select to go in for. I like the does to have good heads and saddles, with plenty of work (spots) on the body and chains. If there is what appears too much

work on them so much the better, but you must have the work well broken up, not blotchy and smeary. In the buck I want a rabbit with a soundly marked nose and clear face and head; good saddle, and nice underneath; I must have all the leg spots there, and the rabbit should be very light in body. These are the kind of English I breed my winners from. I do not believe in mixing the colours in breeding. By that I mean mating tortoiseshells to blacks. Such a mating is a great mistake, and if you do so you will get young ones black and white, with dots of tortoiseshell colour in amongst the black. You may safely and wisely mate a black doe to a blue buck, only for the colour; but you must not mate tortoise and black, or grey and black, or tortoise and grey together, and expect to get sound coloured youngsters. They want keeping separate. I do not believe in mating greys with tortoiseshells, as so many do. The result is you find with present day greys tortoiseshell tints, which spoils the grey altogether. You must never mate rabbits when either is in moult, as the result will invariably be loose-coated young. Never use a sire for three days after he returns from a show! I have my reasons for saying this, but shall reserve them, leaving the reader to pure conjecture. I believe in mating mother and son together, in English, but only once; and sister and brother together, only once. Keep the two best from these matings, and then mate them to the father. This you will find a good way of keeping your colour together, and you are certain to breed some close to the standard required. Of course, I am writing from experience gained in the process of breeding six champions!" This should be explicit enough for the requirements of any intending breeder of English rabbits. We have, however, recently had an opportunity of fully discussing several points upon the breed with Mr. Linley and other breeders, and all agree that there is a regrettable tendency amongst breeders so to mix colours that it is producing disparaging results in more than one direction. In fact, it is having a somewhat similar result to that which has followed the mixing up of colours in the breeding of Dutch. Black and white English are spoilt, so far as purity of colour goes, in many instances by the presence of white ticks, or

hairs in the ears, and the black has a rusty shade instead of that dense colour which marks such a striking contrast with pure white. No one who knows anything of present day English, and the high standard of excellence which is being demanded, can avoid seeing the importance of purity of colour and distinctness of spotting. For instance, the cheek spots, to be nice, should be of a presentable size, say about as large as a three-penny piece. The ears should be well and cleanly cut (in the dark fur) at the roots, not speckled, with the speckles running on to the forehead. The more evenly the eye circles are cut the better. They ought not to run up nearly to the ear roots. If, as Mr. Linley says,—and there is little doubt it is the result of experience—the lighter the markings are in the buck, consistently with plenty of work, the more idealistic it is as a sire, then the necessities of idealistic propagation argue in favour of the smaller as opposed to the very heavy markings. This is not to say that both parents need to be as above, but only to emphasize the advisability of care in selection. On the point as to two leg spots, or two cheek spots on one side, this will sometimes occur in an otherwise well-nigh perfect specimen. Some judges will tolerate two leg spots, but not two on one cheek. The one is a defect openly and immediately visible. The other needs looking for to see it. Personally, we think that whereas both are opposed to the standard, the one is a prominent defect and the other not so much so. Consequently some would attach more weight (to disadvantage) to one than the other. On the question of the tortoiseshell shading in grey and whites, undoubtedly it is sometimes seen, and should be discouraged. On the question of weight—six to eight pounds! We think this a doubtful margin. The English does not need to be an inordinately large rabbit. Let anybody who tries to imagine the present day ideal English, picture an eight pound rabbit, and see what they would get! Is this really meant to be a serious piece of advice to breeders? To get an English up to 8 lbs. in weight! In order the more clearly to set out the points of this beautiful variety we annex the standard of excellence adopted by the National English Rabbit Club:—

HEAD MARKINGS—

					Points.
Perfect butterfly smut	...	...	...	...	15
Circle round eye	...	...	...	...	8
Eye spot to be clear from eye circle	...	...	...	...	6
Eye, clear and bold	...	...	...	...	3
Ears, neat and clear from white, not over 4 inches long	...	...	...	...	5
					— 37

BODY MARKINGS—

Neat saddle, to be herring-boned and clear in any distinct colour	...	...	...	...	10
Sides of body to be nicely broken up in small patches, and not to catch saddle markings	...	...	...	...	12
Chain markings as even as possible on both sides	...	...	...	...	12
Leg markings—One distinct spot on each leg; front legs 6 points; back leg 2 points	...	...	...	...	8
Belly or teat spots (there should be six)	...	...	...	...	6
Colour	...	...	...	...	5
Size and shape six to eight pounds, and between a Silver and a Belgian	...	...	...	...	5
Condition—Good coat and not baggy	...	...	...	...	5
					— 63
					Total 100

It will thus be seen that the award of points for colour is put at the low total of 5; but the remark "between a Silver and a Belgian," with a weight maximum of 8 lbs. seems beside the mark. What size is a Belgian expected to attain, if the maximum for a rabbit "between" that and the Silver is to be 8 lbs.? The thing strikes us as an oversight.

FLEMISH GIANTS.

The illustration we give of a specimen of this large variety of the rabbit family is taken from a photograph of Mr. W. Barton's (Brixton) Champion "Comrie

MR. W. BARTON'S FLEMISH GIANT, CHAMPION "COMRIE LAD."



Lad." This rabbit won the Silver Cup at the Crystal Palace Show in 1905 for the best young Flemish Giant. It was shown by Mr. H. Stevens, of Leicester, and immediately afterwards passed into the possession of Mr. Barton, who paid a substantial price for the animal. Its chief characteristics are its beautiful colour, ear carriage, firm flesh, and soundness of feet. "Comrie Lad" has since won numerous prizes for Mr. Barton, and gained its title to Championship. The general points of the breed are summed up in the standard of the National Flemish Giant Club, an institution which has attracted to its ranks many of the most experienced and successful breeders of Flemish in the Kingdom; and which does its utmost to encourage and stimulate perfection. The standard of points laid down in the Club's rules is as follows:—

Size and weight—Bucks shall not be less than 11 lbs.; does not less than 13 lbs. Size shall be considered irrespective of weight	30
Colour—Dark steel grey, with even or wavy ticking over the whole of the body; head, ears, chest, and feet alike, except belly and under the tail, which shall be white upon the surface of the fur. Any grey, steel, sandy, or other shade on the belly or under the tail, except a streak of grey in each groin, shall disqualify	20
Body large, roomy and flat. Broad fore and hind quarters. Does shall have dewlap evenly carried	15
Legs and feet shall be strong in bone, large, and straight	15
Head and Ears—Head shall be large, full and shapely, eye shall be bold and dark brown in colour. Ears shall be erect and moderately thick	10
Condition—Full, short coat, firm in flesh, and free from cold	10
Total	100

We strongly advise anyone about to take up the breeding of Flemish Giants to buy the best blood that

their means will allow, and on no account begin with young that can be purchased for 2s., or 3s. apiece—"that will make winners,"—such as the smart men of the rabbit Fancy advertise from time to time. If the best are acquired at the start, there is a better prospect of the beginner's hopes not being crushed, for it may be truly said that many a man has given up the Fancy in disgust because he has been deceived in this manner. Therefore, by way of warning—"Beware of dazzling advertisements of prospective winners for sale at the price of an old shoe." After a young doe has been purchased, we advise the mating of the same to a stud buck possessing superior points. For instance: if the doe fails on feet, take care that you mate her to a buck that excels in such. The same course should be followed if the doe has not good body colour, or a light chest, or bad ear carriage. Before breeding, make sure that both rabbits are in perfect health, and that their coats are free from any sign of looseness; and, in the case of both, but certainly in that of the buck, be sure that he is tight in skin—not flabby and loose. The tighter the coat and skin, and the more the fur glistens and shines, the better. If you pay particular heed to this matter, disappointments will not cross your path so much; if you neglect it, you may find the young have long and loose coats instead of those which are short in the fur and sharp. All these apparently little matters help to swell the points of excellence of the rabbit when judged by the standard laid down, namely 100 points. When the young are a couple of days old, take the doe right out of the hutch and see how many she has in the litter. Pick out those which look red along the stomach, or as Fanciers call them, the "red-bellied ones." These are the correct ones to keep. If you desire to grow them large, or as one breeder puts it—"to make giants of them," only three or four should be allowed to remain on the doe. Give the others to a foster doe; they will do for the table. If you have no room for them, put them under the water and drown them. Do not remove the young left with the doe as long as she remains kind to them; but you must observe her closely as the young grow older, for sometimes she will worry them, especially if she is desiring to breed again. The longer the young remain on the doe the larger they grow.

When the young are matured enough to take away from the doe, do not be discouraged if they happen to look a poor colour in their nest fur, but wait and see the result of the first moult—what some breeders call “the ten-weeks’ moult,” and then you will probably see a great difference in the colour. We are of opinion that you can never see the beauty of a Flemish Giant, or discern truly what it will make, until it reaches the age of six months. When it is in bloom, with that lovely steel colour and shading, is the correct time to show a Flemish Giant. Their coats in our opinion are something like a flower. They bud, bloom, and fade; then moult again. You will require a large-sized breeding hutch for Flemish; indeed, a large-sized hutch always. A good size is 4 feet in length, 20 inches wide and 16 inches high. If you should be fortunate to breed a litter of four from tip-top blood, and only one of them should happen to be a champion, a long way in front of the others in point of merit, do not despise the others. All are bred the same way—possess the same blood, and, in the end, may produce you better results than you will get from the one that is a champion show specimen. Never be too eager to part from the others of a litter where a champion appears.

HIMALAYANS.

The Himalayan is familiarly known amongst fanciers as “the black pointed rabbit.” The breed has not made such rapid strides in public favour, and as a show specimen, as many others have done. The reason usually given for this is their non-retention of colour in the same degree as some of the other marked varieties. And we think a further reason why they are not popular with fanciers is that they do not appear to be so hardy, or possess such a robust constitution as many others. In the matter of non-retention of colour, some idea of the disappointment often experienced by breeders of exhibition Himalayans may be entertained when it is pointed out that you may have a really first class show Himalayan one week—dense in all the black points, such as nose, ears, and feet, and pure in its white fur,

sleek, lively and strong; the next week the same rabbit, and especially in hot weather, will be found to have lost its depth of black, clearness of white, bloom and brilliance, and be totally unfit for exhibition. A very old breeder (20 years' experience) tells us that he has frequently known those who have taken up the Himalayan Fancy with zeal and enthusiasm rapidly lose heart through the rabbit so soon "going off colour." And yet, in spite of this drawback, he writes us:—"I honestly believe that if anyone had the time and kept a good number of Himalayans of the very best blood, they would find this variety one of the most profitable in the Fancy." The standard of points of the Himalayan Club, which we shall append at the end of this chapter, is an excellent synopsis of the characteristics of the variety. Some of us are inclined to the view, however, after taking all points, and the difficulties of breeding those points, into consideration, that the Himalayan Club might allow an extra point or two for nose marking, but that is, after all, a mere matter of detail, as most of the judges are so impressed with this view that they usually attach greater importance to good nose marking than the standard of the Club would seem to warrant them in doing. What is meant by good nose marking? It is that the black fur on the nose should be as extensive as possible, extending well down to the lips and jaw, and up the face. This is perhaps the prettiest point in an all-round pretty rabbit. Another item of interest, to which much importance attaches, is the colour on the hind feet, or hocks. The very best specimens now shown are what is called "well-stocked" —that is, the black marking extends well up the leg past the hock joint, and the density of black marking is well sustained so as to make it cleaner cut, and more distinctly defined. There were two does shown at the Tunbridge Wells show of 1906, to which the judge (a specialist on the variety) awarded first and second prizes, in addition to the special prizes offered by the Himalayan Rabbit Club, which excelled in this respect. Everything is being done by this Club to advance the interests of the breed. By reason of their susceptibility to lose colour, or fade, Himalayans need somewhat special treatment. Many breeders aver that these rabbits cannot be bred to exhibition perfection out-of-doors. One very old

and experienced breeder (Mr. T. J. Hearnden) says:—“I do not believe in breeding Himalayans out-of-doors. I prefer in-door breeding. I have bred them in hutches out-of-doors, but could never get them nearly so dark in marking as those housed in-doors. Be sure you keep them clean, as this is absolutely necessary if you want to be successful in the show pen. Do not be afraid of using plenty of sawdust on the hutch floor; do not, if you can help it, allow any urine to get on to the rabbits' feet, as this is ruinous to their colour.” We do not advocate keeping Himalayans in the dark, as some do; but they certainly need a subdued light. And some care is requisite in feeding this breed. Carrots are considered by some not to be suitable. Others oppose soft food. But this, after all, is a matter for individual judgment, regulated by circumstances and results. One thing is very certain; the Himalayan is not a lasting rabbit, so far as its show career is concerned. We want to lay additional stress upon the need for purity of colour in the black points. What is wanted is a deep, rich, lustrous black, not a mahogany, or brownish, or rusty colour. The following is the standard of points as adopted by the Himalayan Rabbit Club:—

Points.

Ears—Short, tapering, and well set	...	...	15
Nose mark—Even and well up between the eyes	...	...	15
Front Feet—Long, slender, and markings well up	...	15	
Hind Feet—to correspond, markings well up hocks	...	25	

(In all four of the above points the black fur must be dense.)

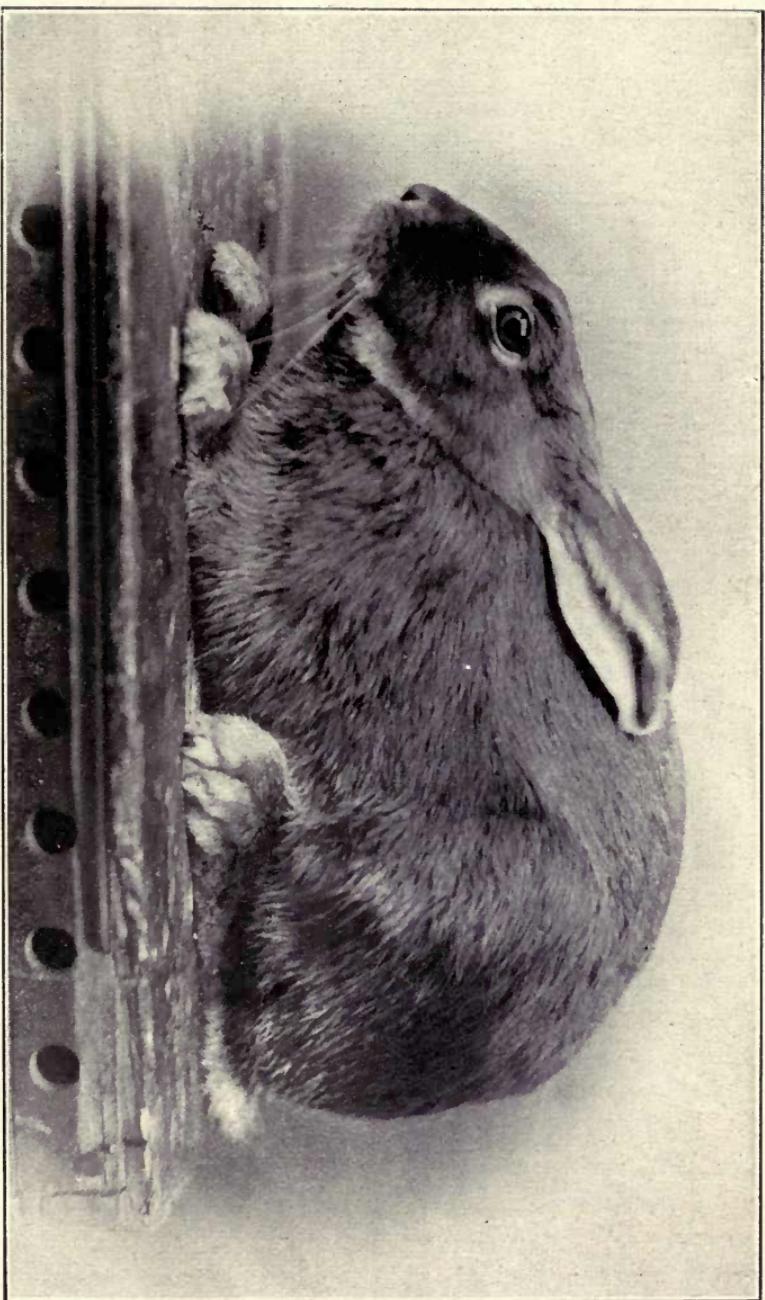
Eyes—Bold, bright and pink	...	...	...	5
Tail—Neat and black	...	...	...	5
Shape—Neat	...	...	...	5
Coat—Short, fine, and pure white	...	...	...	5
Weight—About five pounds	...	...	...	5
Condition	...	...	...	5

100

A white, or putty nose is a total disqualification. Dark fur on head or body, except where specified above, incurs a loss of 10 points.

THE TAN RABBIT.

This variety is sub-divided. There are black and tans and blue and tans. Either is very attractive. The tan is a small and neat rabbit (the smaller in reason, the better). It should be cobby in shape, and on no account a heavy thick-boned rabbit. The colour, in blacks, should be of a deep, not a rusty looking black. In blues the colour should be pure and dense, but bright and sparkling, not dull or brownish in tinge. The triangle, or triangular shaped piece of tan fur at the back of the ears, i.e., on the neck, should be of a rich golden colour, dense but bright, and clean cut and well defined. The face of the tan rabbit ought to be rich black or blue, with tan nostrils—not nose, but merely the nostrils. There should be a circle of tan fur round the eyes, and along the edge of the jaw or jowl a well defined rich and dense tan line; plainly visible. The front legs and feet should be clear black or blue—as clear as possible, but each toe should be pointed with tan. Neat ears are requisite on a good tan. They must on no account be long or heavy, and must be pure in the black or blue, with outside and inside edges rich tan; and some breeders claim two distinct tan spots at the base, resting on the forehead nearly. The hind feet should be as densely tanned as possible on the inside, the outside being black or blue. As much and as rich tan colour on chest—right up to throat—as possible; and a densely and fully tanned belly. Four pounds is the weight advocated by some, but $4\frac{1}{2}$ is the maximum of the Tan Rabbit Club standard, which we shall append. This is a rabbit which has been tamed and vastly improved in a few years. We remember seeing some specimens in a show in the south of London some few years ago as wild as any conies. They hid under the hay in the pens, and were poor in colour, and bore traces of half cultivation. To-day the tan is a lovely creature, and as tame as need be desired. There is some difference of opinion in regard to the merits of certain points of the rabbit. All attach much importance to profusion and density of chest tan, but some give little weight detrimentally to slight tan brindling on the fore legs and feet. Others claim clear (of tan) legs and feet. All seem to agree on a dense black face, but the trouble



Mr. C. BURTON'S BLUE AND TAN, CHAMPION "EARL OF ESSEX." (A GREAT WINNER).

seems to be to secure the profusion and density of tan, and the clearness of face, feet, and saddle at one and the same time. One thing is certain—the acme of perfection is to be found in the profusion of tan, and the clearness of points, and to this end wise breeders are steering. Mate black to blue. Sometimes black to black. But it is not deemed advisable by some to pair two clear footed rabbits together, as they declare you lose chest tan thereby. The Belgian Hare has been used to cross in to obtain tan, but it seems unnecessary, as the tan colour on the tan rabbit is richer in many cases than that to be met with in the Belgian Hare. This is the Tan Rabbit Club's standard of points:—

	Black and Tan.	Points.
Black—Dense
Tan—Deep and rich
Triangle	...	5
Hind feet	...	10
Front feet	...	5
Chest and flank	...	5
Nostrils, eyes, and jowl	...	5
Ears, outer and inner margin	...	5
Black saddle, free from ticking	...	5
	—	40
Ears short and black	...	10
Shape—Dutch	...	10
Eye—Full	...	5
Condition	...	10
	—	100
Blue and Tan.		
		Points.
Blue—Sound	...	10
Tan—Rich	...	15
Distribution—Same as black and tan	...	40
Shape—Dutch	...	10
Ears—Short and blue	...	10
Eye, blue and full	...	5
Condition	...	10
	—	100

Weight of an adult tan, 3 lbs. to $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

THE BLUE IMPERIAL.

Since last we wrote upon this variety a little headway has been made in popularising them. It is only rarely, however, that they are met with in the show pen, and there were not above three exhibitors in competition at the Crystal Palace show in 1907. Only recently we were talking to an old fancier, and he said "I know how Imperials are got!" but when he was asked to explain, he declined, as if he had been asked to part with so much gold dust. The origin remains a secret so far as the general run of fanciers are concerned, although there has been some speculation and a few opinions hazarded. If the rabbit had become popular—that is, if it had "caught on" at its first introduction, there might have been experiments and persistent enquiry, but it has not been so. By the vast bulk of fanciers the Imperial has been looked upon simply as an ordinary blue rabbit, has found little favour, and consequently has made but little headway. Colour is one of the chief points for consideration advanced by the originator. This should be an even dark blue all through, and in shape the rabbit should favour the Belgian hare somewhat, save for raciness. In weight it should not exceed 7 lbs., should have erect ears, not more than 5 inches long, deep blue eyes, and a soft and bright coat, not too short. Miss Mabel Illingworth, of Cambridge, is the originator of the Imperials, and clings with true womanly tenacity to the secret of her pets' antecedents. We are able to say that Miss Illingworth is as enthusiastic as ever over the ultimate success of the variety; and if ever anyone deserved success, this lady does, for her perseverance in face of little but discouragement. We give the standard of excellence as published by the originator:—

	Points.
Shape and Size—Somewhat like the Belgian Hare, though not quite so racy, weight when full grown, over 6 but not to exceed 7 lbs.	... 25
Head—Long and narrow	... ... ... 10
Ears—Between 4 and 5 inches in length, round at the tips, carried erect, and fairly close together	... ... ... ... 5

Points.

Eyes—Large, bright, and deep blue in colour	... 15
Colour—An even dark blue all over ...	... 25
Coat—Soft and bright, but not too short ...	... 15
Feet—Clean and straight, and free from bars	... 5
	—
	100
	—

POLISH.

This rabbit is small—none are smaller. Its fur is pure white, and its eyes should be of that beautiful shade of ruby which looks glorious when taken in contradistinction to the pure white fur which covers the whole of the body. In fact, a Polish rabbit, to be a good one, should not have a single discoloured hair. Its head should on no account be long and thin, and the ears well set on, short and tapering nicely to a point. On no consideration should they be wide at the tips, but be carried with a nice folding—not open, sow's ear fashion, with the insides facing you as you take a frontal view of the animal. What you must have is a chubby little rabbit with a tight, short, springy coat—the shorter the better—having a splendid gloss, and being as pure in the white as possible. The Polish has a bold eye, and the richer that eye is in ruby colour (some call it pink, we do not) the better. Under no circumstance must the rabbit be large, coarse, long in coat, or have its ears carried widely. This spoils it. Polish are fairly prolific, and although so small, are daily finding fresh admirers. They are very quick in their actions, and are sometimes a bit spiteful, as indeed are others; this is largely the result of teasing or meddlesomeness. A show specimen requires a good deal of care and attention, and not a little grooming. Watchfulness must be observed in the matter of bedding to prevent the rabbit's fur from getting stained, and it should on no account be allowed to have the full rays of the sun upon it. A good thick sawdust bedding is needed all the year, to absorb all moisture, and this should be cleaned out frequently when saturated. Hay is needed in winter, on top of the sawdust. In the standard of

points of excellence, condition and coat score nearly one third of the allotted total, so that a fancier of Polish in order to be successful, would need to devote some time to preparation, or as the Fancy styles it, grooming. Mr. G. A. Townsend, of Leeds, a great admirer and excellent judge of Polish, tells us that to obtain the coat and condition most desirable, it is necessary to have both parents in the best of coat when mated. So that like would seem to produce like in this case. It is not always so with animals, although some critics would try and persuade us to the contrary. Polish are in full bloom at from eight to ten months old, and the best are bred in winter, probably in January and February. Those who keep them declare that these delicate and fascinating dwarfs of the rabbit family are very clean in their habits. Perhaps they are aware of the purity of their dress, and that soils spoil. "The best way to remove any dirt from the coat of a Polish," says the authority just alluded to, "in places where the rabbits cannot well reach to clean themselves, is by the aid of a bread crust not too dry. Be careful the bread is clear of grease, and mind you do not pull the ears in handling. Some use a damp wash-leather to rub the rabbit down with. Polish need constant grooming, and a good plan is to dip the hands in dry corn flour, which will improve the coat, leave it glossy, and enable it the better to defy the dirt of the show pen." Mr. Townsend naively adds the advice to the groomer to see that he leaves none of the corn flour in the coat, or "dire consequences may follow." Of course he means allegations of faking, etc. Some advocate the avoidance of hay bedding, owing to the dust, etc., but that is a matter of opinion in which we do not quite concur.

ANGORAS.

A great deal of energy and zeal on the part of breeders of this variety has secured for it of later years a considerable advance in popular favour. It is of no use anyone with a limited stock of patience taking up the breeding and exhibiting of Angora rabbits. If they do they are foredoomed to failure. The great

length of an Angora's coat, its tendency to become matted unless constantly brushed, and the necessity for extraordinary precautions as to the condition of the rabbit's bedding, etc., combine to establish a set of conditions which none but the most patient and painstaking could possibly fulfil. Up to a very few years ago there was only one kind of Angora (the white) bred. Even now, under modern conditions, that variety holds sway, although what are called blues and fawns are fairly numerous. In very large shows classes are given for coloured Angoras as well as whites; and we have seen and awarded high honours to a really nice specimen of Dutch-marked, which we understand was sold for export to America at a substantial price. It will be advisable to take some of the principal qualities of the breed, and allude to them in detail. First, then, as a rabbit for table it is not to be recommended. Not on any objectionable account, but it is more a rabbit of coat than of flesh. Length of coat is a great feature. We have seen full grown specimens with fur from 4 to 5 inches long, and that is well within the limit of exactitude. There is a great tendency to the coat shortening at the shoulders and fore part, hence much importance attaches to rabbits that excel in length of fur in that particular. The face and ears ought to be thickly coated with fur, and there should be tufts to the tips of the ears. This latter is a symptom of development in a specimen of excellence, and is looked upon with great favour. The eye ought to be of a ruby shade of colour in the whites, and the iris should follow the colour of the body coat in the coloured specimens as nearly as possible. The Angora will sometimes be found sitting with its head nestled back into its body, so to speak, in which case length of coat on the neck, chest, and shoulders lends to the animal a rounded appearance. It should have neat ears, carried in a semi-erect position. Quality of fur too, is highly esteemed. For instance, it should be silky and fleecy, although we are inclined to think that too much stress is laid upon this in mating, hence a coat of inordinate delicacy of texture, which becomes too woolly and inclined to close up and mat. Further, it militates against length and fullness of appearance, inasmuch as it will be found that the fur is not sufficiently strong in fibre to bear its

own weight so to speak. Such coats demand an extraordinary amount of care, and daily brushing, and unless they receive it, will soon spoil. We advise breeders to get a little strength into the fibre of the fur as well as quality. The feet should be thickly coated. Specially made brushes are used to keep the coats of Angoras fit for exhibition, and those often shown most successfully belong to ladies! The rabbit is placed on a pedestal—upon which a cloth has been spread—and the fur brushed upwards into shimmering waves by a light application of the brush. Care is taken to brush the rabbit well on its flanks and stomach. Good, clean, wheat straw is the best to use for bedding purposes. Hay will soon mat the coat. We herewith give the standard of excellence adopted by the National Angora Rabbit Club:—

	Points.
Wool—Quality—Texture as silky as possible	... 30
Wool—Length and Quantity—evenly thick all over (not to be matted)	... ... ... ... 25
Front—Full and prominent	... ... ... ... 10
Ears—Short, well wooled and tufted	... ... 10
Size and Shape—Round, snowball like, weight over 6 lbs.	... ... ... ... 15
Condition—Clean, well fed, healthy, and well groomed	... ... ... ... 10
	<hr/> 100

Eyes—Pink, bright, and bold.

Legs—Straight and heavily wooled.

Tail—Large and full wool.

Head—Noble appearance and well wooled.

N.B.—Wool to be long and thick between and behind the ears.

LOPS.

These were once upon a time in premier position in the rabbit Fancy. Now-a-days there are fifty breeders of Belgian Hares, Dutch, and Silvers, to one

of Lops. The reason is not far to seek. In estimating the points of excellence, so much importance has been attached to the length and width of the rabbit's ears that artificial means have had to be resorted to to enable a fancier of the variety to compete successfully. In this process of growing long and wide ears, in addition to selection in mating, artificial heat and hand manipulation are great adjuncts. We have on many occasions gone into the rabbitry of a well-known and successful breeder of lop-eared rabbits, but never remember to have done so without seeing him take down the thermometer and note the temperature, either with satisfaction or the reverse. "I like it 60 degrees," was the usual remark. "Then things go on all right." And out he would fetch a rabbit on to a little table and commence to manipulate its ears. This manipulation consisted in gently gripping the ear roots with the thumb and finger and gliding them gently along towards the middle of the ears, exercising a slight and gradual pulling pressure all the time. This gradual working had a wonderful effect on the length of the rabbit's ears, and did not injure them. In the lop-eared variety, length and width of ears are the chief points of excellence. It is no uncommon thing to meet with specimens 27 ins. in length by $6\frac{3}{4}$ ins. and 7 ins. in width. Ears of a nice substance and free from knots are preferred. Another point which is receiving more attention is straightness of fore legs, shape of head—Romany—and fullness of eye. This has reference to what is called an "all-property" rabbit, i.e., one well developed in all other points, in addition to ears. There are blacks, greys, fawns, sooty fawns (or fawns with dark shadings), grey and white, black and white, yellow and white, and tortoiseshells (or shaded fawn and white). It is scarcely necessary to give the standard, as the great point is length and width of ears. There are classes at the best rabbit shows for various lengths, i.e., 23 inch, 25 inch, and any length over that. Sometimes the classification is even more widely extended than that.

CHAPTER I.

CAVIES.

ALTHOUGH there are many men and women in the ranks of the Cavy Fancy, their number is far less than those engaged in rabbit keeping. There seem to be more inducements to keep rabbits than cavies, and the uses to which the former can be put are more remunerative than is the case with the latter. For all that, the modern Cavy is a very beautiful little creature, and whether it be the long-coated Peruvian, the harsh coated and freely rosetted Abyssinian, or the many subdivisions of the smooth-coated (or English), much progress has been made towards the point which goes to make up perfection in each. Notwithstanding the drawbacks which exist to the keeping of Cavies as a self-supporting hobby, they have at least this advantage over mice—they are not so objectionable, when kept in numbers, to the sense of smell as are mice. The Cavy too (call it a guinea pig if you like, for Auld Lang Syne) is a great favourite with children, and that is something in its favour. The varieties are pretty, many of them, their colours diversified, and their coats glossy and attractive. In addition, they are clean animals, fairly hardy, easily fed, and in many ways most desirable pets. We shall deal first, in connection with cavy keeping, with

HOUSING.

Having gone exhaustively into the subject of accommodation for hutches, etc., in connection with the keeping of rabbits, it will scarcely be necessary to repeat the information there given. It will be sufficient to say

that what is true about rabbit keeping is equally applicable to Cavies. Whether the hutches be kept out of doors, which can be done with equal success (as in the case of rabbits), or whether in a shed, stable, loft, or other building, the great point is to keep the Cavies dry and free from draughts. If it is decided to keep the animals out of doors, it will be well to set the hutches against a brick wall, and to construct a roof over the same as recommended for rabbits. A boarded roof can be first constructed, giving the same the proper pitch to allow the wet to run off freely. Upon this nail a good covering of felt, well prepared. See that it overlaps well at the joints. Procure sufficient gas tar to thoroughly paint it over, and boil it, at the same time adding a portion of pitch. When melted, brush this well into the felt, looking carefully to the joints. When brushed all over, throw upon it some gritty sand, which will have the effect of hardening the "paint," and making the roof watertight. Fill in the sides up to the roof, and leave the front open. It will be as well to see that the roof spans out far enough to allow of your standing under to feed the cavies, etc., in inclement weather. If kept in a shed or loft, care should be exercised to prevent dampness or draughts, and to secure ventilation at the same time. Nothing destroys the health of any animal kept in confinement like damp conditions or draught. It is impossible to repeat this caution too often. The roof of an out-door structure of the kind alluded to should be re-painted once a year, as the destructive effects of rain, sun, and frost are great. A roof thus attended to will last at least four years. The same remarks apply to a shed thus roofed. Some prefer a corrugated iron roof, but we think it has many disadvantages beside a felt one. Still, that is a matter for choice. Tar is a splendid preservative of either wood, felt, or indeed any other substance upon which it is placed that is subject to the inclemencies of the weather. Before you erect your shed, or shelter, make up your mind how many hutches you wish it to accommodate, and the size you intend having your hutches. Leave room for contingencies, and then build accordingly. The plan we should recommend for hutches for Cavies would be as follows:—We should make provision for single Cavies for breeding purposes,

and also have larger hutches for runs for the young of either sex. There is no need to go to great expense in the provision of hutches. Cube's sugar boxes are amply large enough for three cavies, and make splendid breeding hutches for single cavies also. We should proceed to make the fronts on the same plan as rabbit hutches, leaving ample door space, and as much open front as is reasonable. Half inch mesh netting is the best and the safest for the open part of the front, as it prevents the smallest cavy from escaping, and a cat cannot maraud from the outside. Of course, if you have a large shed or building to use, and space in abundance, you can vary the size of your hutches for the purposes to which they are to be put. Always give plenty of hutch room if possible, and plenty of fresh air. At night time it is best, in winter, to shelter the stock from snowstorms, and sleet blasts, and this can be done either by a canvas front let down by rollers, or by a sliding shutter along the front of the shelter. We shall now touch upon the subject of bedding, as that forms part of the system called "Housing." The very best possible bottom bedding for any animals of this kind is pitch pine sawdust, with straw on top. Some prefer peat moss and straw; others sawdust and hay. Always buy your straw, and also your hay. We are no believers in that which is begged from tradesmen as a make-weight for custom extended. Especially would we warn intending cavy keepers against the use of "packing" from tradesmen. It is dangerous from many points of view, often it is of the worst quality, or badly harvested, very frequently cat or mice contaminated, mildewed, or musty. Whatever you give to your cavies in the form of straw or hay bedding, don't give begged stuff. Buy the best, it is the cheapest. One well-known breeder gives us a piece of evidence on this question of bedding which is entirely at variance, in its results, with our experience with rabbits, but we have such a high regard for his practical knowledge, that we gladly bow to his opinion, so far as cavies go. He says:—"Keep them warm. The warmer you keep a short-coated cavy the shorter his coat will be, which is very necessary for exhibition purposes." The straw should be short, but perfectly clean and pure, and the hay fragrant and well gotten.

FEEDING.

Second in importance to housing (is it really so, or are both equal?)—is feeding. To venture to enumerate the many views, good, bad, and indifferent, upon the question of foods desirable for feeding pet stock, would fill more pages in our book than we can possibly devote to Cavydom. It is quite true that “what is one man's meat is another man's poison,” and many men are of different minds. But there can be very little difference of opinion upon the necessity to give stock the soundest, cleanest, ripest, and most wholesome food. Quality admits of no objection. Mr. W. W. Ward, of London, a long-time and successful breeder of Cavies, says:—“Feed on good sound oats, clover, or meadow hay, and plenty of green food. Cavies are not very particular what kind of green food or roots they get, so long as they do get them. And do not forget to give them a good drink of clean, cold water at least once a day, as this keeps their kidneys in good order. Milk, egg and milk, good broad bran, plenty of clover hay, and an occasional stiff meal of bran, Indian meal and middlings will soon fit them for the show pen. If these remarks on feeding are acted up to you will always have your stock in good order, and illness and disease will be practically nil.” Before making any further remarks upon food, we may well allude to the vessels in which food is given. Some dispense with vessels altogether, and their position is not an illogical one, if they see to it that the hutch floors are scrupulously clean. This can always be relied upon if the sawdust bedding is kept clean, plentiful and fresh. Otherwise the practice is inadvisable and risky. Hutches can always be kept pure and sweet, floor and all, if they are lime-washed or white-washed (use plenty of size) frequently. To feed on the hutch floors gives the cavies a bit of exercise to find the oats. But if the cavy keeper desires system, uniformity, and appearance, then he will get some proper food pans. These can be had in terra cotta or white ware, and to any size in reason from the makers who advertise in *Cage Birds, The Poultry World*, and other live stock journals. If you feel that your means will not allow of the purchase of these food pans, you can use the

saucers for flower pots. I used these for rabbits, but continual breakage sickened me, and the hutch floor was the last resort. If you use food vessels at all, the advantage of the proper trough is apparent. It is heavy, and the cavies are not so likely to turn it over. But if water is given, vessels will be absolutely necessary, in which case it will be best to get the troughs. Whatever else is done, let there be no fads in feeding cavies. They do not want to be as fat as Berkshire pigs just ready for the butcher; neither do they want to be as lean and scraggy as some of the "mutton" sold in the poor districts of London at 2d. per lb. What is wanted is a sufficiency of firm solid flesh, liveliness, and a shiny coat. These are all indicative of good feeding and health. Feed as regularly as you expect your own meals. We think twice a day ample. Let the food be pure; let it be plain; give it regularly; watch carefully that the food suits the stock; and give it in variety, and clean. If you do not have food that is of good quality and sound, your stock will suffer. Much of the oat supply on the market is of an inferior quality, and possesses very poor feeding properties. If you will sample the different bulks of oats on the market you will find they vary greatly. What is wanted is a full oat, one that will scale at least 40 lbs. to the bushel, and if you are buying it is always as well to stipulate the weight. Use your nose to the oat supply, and also taste, indeed to all the food you give your cavies, and see that it is sweet and free from mustiness. If you select the best food you will have to pay a good price for it, but it is money well spent. Beware of cat or mouse contamination. Our advice is to give green food or roots as the first meal, and if you will add dry food, let it be a little bran. The evening meal should consist of a good feed of oats, a handful of clover hay, nice and thick in the stems, or meadow hay well gotten and fragrant to the smell. Green food or roots. We must say here that the greatest care must be taken, or disaster will result, to see that the green food is never wet or frost-bitten, or the roots unsound or earthy! Watch the oats and see that they are not full of green corns. What are the green foods to be given? As Mr. Ward says cavies are not very particular. They will eat chickweed (the white flowering—the red flowering is poison-

ous), dandelion (which needs to be given sparingly), hedge parsley, or "keck" as we used to call it, when as boys we gathered it in the hedgerows for our rabbits, and plodded home with it, stopping now and again—Ben Bolt fashion, to "gather the (wild) flowers as they grew"—plantain, grass, turnip tops, garden parsley, groundsel, shepherd's purse, cauliflower, and roots. If possible, the green food should be procured from places where the soil is poor and the succulence of the green stuff less plentiful. Then you need to observe great regularity in feeding, as we have already hinted. We firmly believe that upon this hinges a great deal of success or failure to condition your stock. Some people are so thoughtless and inhuman as to feed their cavies—of course, we are not alluding to genuine cavy fanciers—in a most irregular way. They never feed them at the same time of day twice in a month. Sometimes they do not give them more than one meal a day. Sometimes that is in the morning, at other times the morning is skipped and they are fed at night. Put their keepers on one meal in 24 hours and see how they would shape! It is ridiculous, it is unkind. Finally, let us say that if you use food vessels it will pay you to keep them clean. Do not be afraid to wash them. Permanganate of potash is cheap enough. A pennyworth dissolved in a gallon of water will furnish a gallon of "syrup" to be "broken down" for use daily. You may think the vessels do not get impure and unclean quickly, but they assuredly do, and need cleansing. See that this is done.

BREEDING.

Ere we proceed one step further we feel called upon to remark that there is an intimate connection between feeding and breeding. One of the most important things for a cavy breeder to see to is that he does not overfeed his breeding sows. If he does, he will get precious few young ones. If anyone was hasty in asking—Where is the connection between feeding and breeding, the secret is soon out. Great, overfat, lazy sows are seldom breeders, and if they do breed, they seldom rear their young. Do not let the reader go to the other extreme, and conclude that we mean to preach the doctrine that very thin sows breed the best. Not so.

There is just as much and just as little logic in the one premises as in the other. What is wanted here is the exercise of reason and common sense. Over-fat folk, for instance, are a nuisance to other people, and a misery to themselves; but that is a long way from saying that the most inspiriting sight one can look upon in humanity is a person with a face the thickness of a steel fender bar. Stamina is needed in the dam to nourish and bring up her young. What is really necessary in cavy breeding is to be careful that both parents are healthy, in fairly good flesh, and in the best of coat. Here are a few of a series of well tried rules:—Never allow more than three sows to one boar, and these should if possible, all be placed in his hutch at one time. This prevents them from fighting, which they will do if you allow several days to elapse, i.e., put in one at a time. Do not, if possible, and if you want strong, healthy young ones, allow the sow to bring up more than two at a time. Always give the growing youngsters plenty of hutch room, as without it you will never get large pigs. You may keep the three sows in the one hutch from the time of mating until near upon the period for the young to appear, when the sows must be separated, or ill-luck will result; and it is certainly advisable to separate the young boars from the sows at a fairly early age. We prefer it being done quite early, as it is just as easy to let the sexes run separately in batches, as to allow them to intermix, and much safer, and more satisfactory. When you commence breeding, go upon some well-regulated system. We have entered upon the subject of in-breeding in rabbits, and it will be sufficient to say that practically the same rules apply on this head as to cavies. It will have to be done in all cases where success is sought, but three things must be present when you in-breed: Health, condition, and perfection of points on both sides. To in-breed faults is to perpetuate them. To rush hither and thither for different sires just because they are winners is not in-breeding at all. No doubt there are conditions in cavy breeding different to rabbit breeding, but not on this question of pedigree. Someone has talked about the “Coffin of pedigree breeding,” and taken a keen relish in his ability to drive another nail into it! But pedigree breeding has accomplished much, and will accomplish

still more, after its assailants and their opportunism are forgotten. It is well to moderate your zeal when breeding. Do not expect too many litters in a year. Be satisfied with two or three. There can be no doubt that many fanciers overstep the bounds of prudence in this respect. Another point worth remembering is to be careful and retain, each season, some of your best young stock. Cavies will not go on breeding for ever. They get exhausted, and the progeny puny and disappointing. Look well after the sows at breeding time, and mind they are substantially fed and bedded. If you have a sow in young, mind how you handle her, if you handle her at all. On no account startle her, or subject her to fright. And if you are an exhibitor, do not send a sow to a show when she is in young. I have seen this done, and have felt very indignant. Besides, a sow is not in a fit condition to stand the ups and downs of a railway journey at that time, especially when the "tender mercies" of the average railway porter are considered. Our advice is to select a certain variety—one you most favour, and stick well to that variety. Do not attempt to breed too many varieties. It is better to do a little and do it well, than to attempt a lot and spoil it all. Stick firmly to the idea of purity. Whatever variety you take up, pursue the breeding of it on well-recognized lines. Do not make "experiments" until you have had experience. We have frequently met with fanciers who have told us what matings they have tried in order to obtain this point and that. Why need they have done it, when there was at hand the article already prepared, aye, and prepared by men with experience. Look well to the nourishment of the sow when suckling her young, and to the young when coming off the mother. It is then that very frequently young cavies go wrong. Do not remove the young from the sow all at once, but gradually, or you may have milk troubles. We will now pass on to the subject of

EXHIBITING.

There is no period of the fanciers' experience so exciting as that at which he commences to exhibit. We well remember our first win, many many years ago, in the rabbit fancy. We have grown ever so much older

since then, but circumstances, so far as they affect fanciers under similar conditions, have not altered or modified in the least. About as happy as any man in the world is the fancier who has just won his initial first prize with the pets he has taken so much interest in. In cavies, as in rabbits, condition is the most important factor, next the possession of a good specimen. Because we lay so much stress upon condition, it is no argument that we consider a bad exhibit shown in good condition should beat a good one, badly shown; but the competition at most shows is so very level and so very keen that an exhibitor cannot afford to risk any chances by showing a specimen in poor coat, or low in flesh, or too fat and podgy—destroying in many instances the typical points of excellence. It may be pointed out here, with advantage, that you can the more easily feed a sow out of shape than a boar. Consequently we are decided advocates of keeping the boar in good condition and flesh, and give more latitude in that respect than in the case of the sow. Milk is a splendid conditioner. It gives gloss to the coat. But it is best boiled first. In the case of cavies it is very necessary to handle exhibition specimens frequently. You can scarcely do it too frequently. There is nothing helps a good pig over the stile so much as being well trained. And it goes a long way to hide some of the faults in a pig that cannot lay claim to absolute perfection. It is all very well to protest against this view, as some will doubtless do, but let them undertake the duty of judging—and have a cavy darting here and darting there—never still; they would copy the judge and say “Impossible to discover all its merits.” And it would perhaps suffer the penalty. We are aware that good quality, shape, coat, and colour can be seen, but it will be conceded they can be estimated to better advantage if the cavy is quiet and well trained, than if it is wild and intractable. How much easier and more pleasant it is to handle a well-trained cavy than a wild one! Any way, we throw out the caution and the advice, and leave it there. Results justify our remarks. See that your show specimens are well fed some hour or two before being sent on a journey, and that they have plenty of hay, and a little green food in the box, with sawdust at the bottom. Use baskets in summer, boxes in winter. Make sure

that your fastenings and straps are secure, and that your name and address are plainly discernible on the inside of the package lid. Give the booking clerk at the parcels office ample time before the train leaves to enter up your package. Do not forget also that the booking of live stock entails a little more labour for the clerk than an ordinary parcel! Another point worth noticing is the saving that may be effected in the carriage bill by using proper baskets or boxes. We have saved as much as 25 per cent. by care in the selection of baskets for certain journeys. Half a pound extra in weight on long journeys will often make great difference in the cost for carriage, and that is worth saving. You should always groom your exhibits before sending them off to a show. Indeed this should be a persistent practice daily long before the show. Well groomed exhibits pay for the trouble expended upon them. Carefully study the schedule, and mind you enter in the right classes. Always send fees with entry, to save the Secretary the trouble of applying for them. Mind that the feet of your exhibits are clean, and their toilets properly arranged. Look well to the cavies when they return home from a show. A little nourishing food, and a warm bed in winter will be wise treatment, as the atmosphere of many shows is hot, and the travelling boxes confined and free from draught. The sudden transference to a roomy hutch, without bedding in plenty, might have detrimental effects.

DISEASES.

If a case of diarrhoea arises, treat very much as you would in the case of rabbits, alluded to in chapter thereon, in fact the same remark applies all round to the cavy. For colds, four to six drops of sweet spirits of nitre in milk twice a day is good. For complaints of the eye, such as running cold, Mr. Spiers (Birmingham) will send you a very good lotion. Skin disease may be battled with by the use of blood-cooling medicine, such as flowers of sulphur or magnesia in the food. Study well the hints given in the chapters on rabbit diseases, and you will not go far wide, but cavies, if kept clean, on sound food, and not in an overcrowded state, will not be troubled much with disease.

KEEPING CAVIES FOR PROFIT.

Unlike rabbits, there is no chance of realising profit from cavies as a food supply. If you were to suggest their use as such you would immediately be ruled out, and therefore there is no means of recouping any outlay in that direction. We have heard it suggested that cavies are very nice when cooked. So we have hedge-hogs. But who thinks of hedge-hogs in connection with the general food supply; and who dreams of cavies in such a connection, any more than an Englishman dreams of horse-flesh in the place of beef? There is a market, so we have been told, for cavies for the purposes of snake food and the like. But snakes do not "much more abound" in these isles, and the Zoo would provide but a limited demand when set beside the supply. There is a market for surplus stocks, or wastrels, to be sold as pets, but the demand even here is not over strong. So that the outlet for absolute profit-making would seem to be chiefly confined to the "Fancy" itself, and to that portion of it who pay good prices for the honour of possessing and exhibiting winners. Intrinsically, and apart from "Fancy," the best cavy is not worth more than 2s. 6d. We say this in no disrespectful way. We have a very high regard for cavy fanciers, and admire their persistent efforts to improve and perfect the several varieties. But we are called upon to consider the question of profit, and are driven to the conclusion that beyond the realm of mere "Fancy" there is a very very limited, if any, profit to be made out of cavies. Nevertheless, in that realm, many and many a good sale has been effected, and many a breeder has done well by his cavies.



CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCIPAL VARIETIES.

PERUVIANS.

Perhaps the most difficult to keep of all the cavy tribe are the Peruvians. They may be called the Angoras of the Cavy Fancy, and just as much as Angora rabbits, they are especially suitable for ladies' pets. The beauty of a Peruvian Cavy's coat is very attractive to a lady, and the fair sex have in times past greatly distinguished themselves in the keeping and exhibiting of Peruvians. Length and quality of coat weigh more heavily than mere colour, and items of transcendent importance are what are called the "sweep"—or long flowing hair behind, and the head furnishing, or "front." When in full war paint a Peruvian cavy possesses great length of coat, and can easily hide its head behind the veil of its head furnishing. It is said by some that these animals are not shown so large in size as they once were, and this is attributed to the practice of sending young ones to shows, where they are kept for days often without their accustomed food. As opposed to this view, one of the leading judges of the present day holds that the quality of the Peruvian cavies shown now has never been surpassed. A great deal of attention has to be paid to the coats of Peruvian cavies, and it is said of one lady admirer of them, that she would sit for hours at a stretch brushing and grooming the coats of her pets. This may seem an absurd waste of time, but what is worth keeping at all is worth keeping well. Just as is the case with Angora rabbits, if the coats of Peruvian cavies are not kept continually brushed they will become matted and spoilt. Peruvian cavies which are kept for

show purposes, ought certainly to be provided with separate hutches, or they will assuredly get their coats damaged. Any food that is stimulating to the growth of coat should be given, but care must be taken here to see that it is not of a kind to overheat the system or derange the liver. They need patience to get them to perfection, and we opine it is the knowledge of the unlimited patience needed that deters so many from taking up the variety. One thing that can be done with success is to grease the coats of Peruvian cavies to assist the growth. Now we shall be accused of advocating trickery. Well, we have at the present time some Yorkshire terriers, and a close examination of the coats of each, i.e., cavies and terriers, has satisfied us that there is much in common between them. The texture is about the same, and the gloss needed on a first class specimen about similar. Not only does the greasing process produce a lovely gloss, but it tempers the hair, and prevents that brittleness which often results in broken hairs. In the case of exhibition terriers, one plan is to keep the dogs for a week in grease, then wash them and keep for a week out of grease. But if cavies are judiciously greased—that is if the grease is rubbed well into the hair roots, and not left on in thick substance, as the hair grows, they will not need washing. You must never show them with coats so greasy as to be detected. Care should be taken always to tie up the sweep and any other long part of the coat in such a manner as to prevent it getting soiled and broken in the hutch floor. A good deal depends upon training the coat. It should be rolled up in linen rags, and so tied as to avoid curling, and be frequently unrolled and brushed the way it is desired it should fall when undone for the judge. It is impossible for that official to gauge the length of coat and true merits of a Peruvian cavy unless he does unroll its coat, although we know of one judge who professed to be able to do so. Well! In concluding these remarks upon Peruvian cavies, we will append the recipe for the grease with which we dress our terriers' coats:—Four ounces of cocoa-nut oil; two ounces of olive oil; two ounces of castor oil; one ounce of palm oil; one ounce of cantharides; and two drachms of oil of rosemary. If you take a jar, and the recipe to a chemist, he will have it ready for you the next day.

It is pleasant to the smell, full of hair preserving and growth promoting properties, and of as much value to the human hair as to that of Yorkshire terriers or Peruvian cavies. There is no need to try it unless you like; but here is the recipe if you care to use it. It is best to bed Peruvians on straw, and to place such in their travelling boxes or baskets, when sending them to shows.

ABYSSINIANS.

We shall designate these the Irish terriers of the Cavy Fancy. The frequency with which exhibitors allude in terms of praise to "harshness of coat" is sufficient evidence of the value of that property in the variety under consideration. An Abyssinian cavy with a soft coat is very very heavily handicapped to start with. As far as colour is concerned, they are split up into several, but at the general run of shows the colours compete together. To show the variety there is in respect to colour, we may mention that we have handled some good whole coloured reds, and we have judged some fine and well-broken tortoiseshells. If we have a preference, in this respect, we think the tortoiseshell Abyssinian a most beautiful colour. A great point of excellence in all cavies is shape and size. To be a good one, an Abyssinian must not be long and snipy in head—rat-headed, as we shall call it for present purposes—but in arch of neck to shoulders and outline of back it should rather resemble a well fed short-headed bacon hog. On no account should a cavy be long and snaky in head. A good Abyssinian cavy should have its body coat profusely adorned with rosettes—the more of them the merrier and better for show purposes. These rosettes should be perfectly grown—not made. This remark is called for by reason of the peculiar impression one gets on account of the condition of his hands after handling some Abyssinians. It would astonish an uninitiated person,—who might wonder at the mention of "rosettes" in the coat of a cavy—to find how perfectly the hair turns in the shape of rosettes on the coats of these animals. The more numerous these rosettes are—if perfectly formed—the better. The coat must be harsh and firm, and the rosettes separate and distinct, not mere curls running one into the other. We have

seen some Abyssinians with what we shall call ricketty rosettes, curling in and out like the coat of some thick, wavy-coated Pomeranian dogs. The twists in the coat may be called rosettes, but it is a libel on the term to use it in such a connection.

ENGLISH OR SMOOTH HAIRIED.

These come next in order, and it will be found that blacks and reds are perhaps the most numerous, but there are also creams, chocolates, tortoiseshells, tortoise-shell and whites, agoutis (golden and grey), brindles, Dutch-marked, and we have seen some Himalayan marked, but they were very moderate specimens.

SELF-COLOURED CAVIES.

BLACKS.

There are black cavies and black cavies. This way of putting it often seems a little to smack of Irishism, but it is correct for all that. What is meant by the expression in this instance is that there is a black which is black, and a so-called black which in reality is of a rusty dingy tinge of colour—anything but a real black. It may well be said of the black short-haired cavy that points of extreme importance are size and shape. Picture a good fat bacon hog for body shape, and a short head. A long, rat-shaped head is not indicative of a good smooth cavy. The coat should be short, free from all white hairs, and the colour should run well down to the roots of the hair. A nice short sharp coat is a great desideratum, and the colour should be dense and the coat glossy. The ears should be as black as the coat, and the belly and feet ditto. Many black cavies fail sadly underneath in the matter of density and purity of colour, but when they are got to perfection they are simply grand in richness and depth of black. We remember handling one the property of our esteemed friend the popular cage bird judge, Mr. J. H. Payne, not so very long since. This cavy had won many prizes, was grand in shape, and splendid in

colour. Too much stress cannot be laid upon size and shape in this variety, provided always there is quality, i.e., shortness and glossiness of coat. There is very little doubt that in-breeding to fix the colour led to a decrease in size, but that has been remedied, and now we see some really grand and sound coloured blacks, combining shape with colour and size.

REDS.

Much the same remarks apply to these as to the blacks. It is shape, colour, and quality of coat. Some of the best breeders of reds have climbed to the top of the exhibition ladder by breeding for shape, colour, short glossy coat, ears, and eye. So dense in colour have the red cavies been bred that sometimes doubts have been expressed as to their being natural!

CHOCOLATES AND CREAMS

Are few and far between compared to the blacks and reds. We recently saw some very fair chocolates at a Southern Show, but the colour is not yet fixed in density like unto the blacks and reds, i.e., it is more on the surface and less down to the roots. Further, the shape of the chocolates is not so pronounced. Creams are by no means popular, but are progressing.

AGOUTIS (GOLDEN AND GREY).

These, whether golden or grey, should have good short coats, the undercolour should be rich and dense, and the ticking (or darker hairs) carried all over the body right down to the toes. The difficulties in connection with the agouti cavy are largely centred on the belly. Those who aim at perfection ask for the ticking to be carried not only on to the feet, but the bellies as well. This may come in time. At present it has not been achieved. Agoutis do not want to be too dark, but in the goldens the body colour should answer to the name given.

BRINDLES.

These are very beautiful, when the colours are well broken up. It must be a real and true admixture, much after the style of a good brindle bull-dog, not mere

patches, but brindling proper. Here again shape adds to the value of the cavy, and the colours must be lustrous and the coat short and springy.

TORTOISESHELL AND WHITES.

Mr. W. W. Ward (Finsbury Park), the owner and breeder of Champion "Dolly," writes thus on this beautiful variety:—"How to breed tortoiseshell and whites: Always select the best shaped pigs. Those with good heavy heads, broad shoulders, Roman nose, sound ears—not flesh coloured, nice short coats, as small in patches as you can get them, and as free from brindling or intermixing of colours as possible. Always avoid breeding from banded specimens, as once you get the band in your stock it requires a great deal of breeding out. I would rather breed from tortoise and white cavies that show brindling than from banded specimens. A banded pig is one on which one colour goes in a band right round the body. One of the most important points to remember in connection with this variety is purity of colours. There should be nice rich raven black, good deep red, and pure glossy white patches, which should be as small and clean cut as possible, as numerous as you can get them, and as well placed in variation. Further, a first-class specimen should be as well patched underneath as on top." It is unnecessary to add anything to the above, from a breeder of many years of successful experience.

TORTOISESHELLS.

A somewhat similar piece of advice as to shape and coat texture applies to tortoiseshells as to the tortoiseshell and whites. It must be remembered, however, that a tortoiseshell is not a brindle. A tortoiseshell pig should be very rich in the colour sub-sections, but should not be a brindled pig, i.e., the different colours should be separate and distinct. There should be an utter absence of white.

BRINDLES.

Unlike the tortoiseshell, and the exact reverse, in the case of colour setting, a good brindle wants to be

MESSRS. W. W. WARD AND SON'S TORTOISE AND WHITE CAVY, CHAMPION "DOLLY."



as much intermixed as possible, to show also the different colours in equal profusion. Shape, size, and coat are as important in this as in any other variety of cavy. They are trying, in fact have succeeded in bringing out a kind of fawn brindled pig, and it is very pretty, but not nearly so rich in tone, as yet, as the well understood brindle. Of course, the aim is not red, as in the old brindle, but a rich fawn colour to take its place.

HIMALAYANS.

We have seen a few of these, marked after the Himalayan rabbit, with black nose, ears, and feet. The Himalayan-marked cavy is very much in its infancy at present, and does not seem to have "caught on." The specimens already seen have been very pale in points, and the body colour has not been of that pure white so much needed to show the contrasts. There is time for improvement, however.

DUTCH-MARKED.

These are very beautiful, as well as being exceedingly pretty and valuable. The ideal is the Dutch rabbit. There are reds and blacks. One of the greatest difficulties appears to have been to get well-defined feet stops and freedom from brindling. But that has been conquered in a few instances, and some well nigh perfect specimens have been penned, more numerous perhaps in the reds than in the blacks. Flesh-coloured, or partially flesh-coloured ears have been the cause of much bother; but in the pilgrimage to Mecca there are sure to be stormy places met with by the way; and some do not condemn, with the same random rashness as others, a fourth-point defect when three-fourths of the points of excellence are present. Everyone does not think alike, and there is yet room for difference of opinion.

CHAPTER I.

MICE.

IF ANYONE had mentioned at one time of day their intention of writing and publishing anything in book form on the subject of mice as pets, they would have been fairly laughed out of court. Yet, to-day there are thousands of these attractive little creatures bred in captivity, and upon well-recognized principles as to pedigree and system. There are two clubs for mouse fanciers, and at many of our live stock exhibitions the classes given for mice are more largely patronised than either those for rabbits or cavies. Moreover, what would seem to be fabulous prices (for a mouse) are repeatedly being paid for select show specimens. Keeping fancy mice must be purely a hobby, for there is no other use to which they can be put, however excellent they may be. To give some idea of the extent to which they are bred we will here mention some of the varieties. There are silver greys, silver fawns, and silver browns, tortoiseshells, sable and whites, tricolours, black and tans, blue and tans, sables (dark and medium), agoutis (golden and grey), Dutch-marked, evenly-marked, variegated, broken, creams, whites with pink eyes, ditto with black eyes, self-silvers, blacks, blues, chocolates, fawns, and we do not think this quite exhausts the list. But it will suffice to show the diversity there is in regard to the colours of these little rodents. We shall first touch upon

HOUSING.

Just as in the case of rabbits or cavies, fancy mice, to be kept successfully, must have freedom from damp and draughty conditions. Unless this is ensured, the stock will be puny, bad coated, and miserable to look at. Some say keep them in a cellar, others in a loft, yet others in an attic, but wherever it is let it be dry. Moreover you must see to it that you place an effectual barrier

(if you can) upon the intrusion of common or domestic mice. If not they will damage and probably enter the cages of the Fancy varieties. Some erect shelves round the walls of the room, others have a table on which to stand the cages. Either will do. But of one thing be certain. Unless you keep them scrupulously clean you will know all over the house that mice are in it. Therefore give plenty of ventilation, and see that the open window is sufficiently protected to keep out marauders, such as cats. If you place some half-inch mesh netting across the opening that will be effectual. Take care that you disinfect your mousery and your cages often, and thus guard against the creation of disease. On this subject, Mr. W. R. Hamlin, of Epsom, a most successful breeder and exhibitor of fancy mice, writes:—“If you have not much room at command in which to keep your pets, then make up your mind only to keep a few. It is no pleasure to you to see them yourself, or show them to others, if you have a lot kept cramped up in a small space. Besides, it is not healthy for the mice. Half the disease in any live stock comes from keeping them in an overcrowded state. I have never experienced any difficulty in keeping my stock. They are always healthy, and always in good condition. The best cages to use, to my mind, are the ‘Maxey’ breeding cages. They are flat ones, 12 inches long, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, wired on top, with the nesting part $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The hole for the mice to enter the nesting compartments should be two inches across, and there should be a hole about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches across in the top of the nesting compartment door. This hole should be filled in with perforated zinc. The fronts of the cages open outwards, and make it very easy to clean them out, feed the mice, etc. There are a number of different pattern breeding cages, but the one I have described is the one I like best of any. Some of the best mice have been bred in Fry’s chocolate boxes; but these do not give sufficient room for the mice to my mind.” Mice are called vermin, but for all that they are eminently clean animals, and need to be kept scrupulously clean. You can, of course, use any kind of cage you please in which to house your mice. Some use the revolving wheel cage, and have it made sensibly large. But it is not advisable to keep mice always in

such. You can construct, or have made for a small sum, any pattern of stock cage or single specimen cage you may desire. If you are handy at amateur carpentering you can make your own cages to order. Mr. Hamlin continues on the point of housing:—"It does not matter much where you keep your mice so long as it is dry and free from draughts. Mice can, provided they have warm cages and nice bedding, stand any amount of cold. Mice kept in draughty places, soon start a wheezing or singing sort of noise, which is miserable to listen to. I might add that when cleaning out the cages it is advisable to sprinkle a little disinfectant in the corners. I use Sanitas, which is really good for this purpose. For the runs I think it best to use pine sawdust, which you can buy at sawmills for about 1s. per sack. This quantity would last the ordinary mouse fancier about 12 months. For bedding, use hay. It is so much better than flocks or cotton wool. The latter, in fact, is very dangerous to use because it clings to their feet, and the mice, being clean little things, are constantly licking and cleaning their feet. In this process, if cotton wool is used, they are constantly licking the wool into their stomachs; this very soon kills them. It is well, especially in hot weather, to clean them out thoroughly twice a week, being very careful to scrape out the corners of the cages. It is also well just to scrape off the husks from the oats, etc., every day. In any case, never let the mice go more than a week without cleaning them out."

FEEDING.

This is a most important part of the mouse fancier's curriculum. To ensure a mouse, or any other animal, being kept in good condition, you must feed it properly on the best quality of food. All mouse fanciers, like rabbit and cavy fanciers, do not swear by one particular system of feeding, but all agree in recommending the best quality. In the case of mice, which are given milk and soft foods, it is wise to use vessels for the purpose, to prevent mess, and secure sweet and wholesome conditions. For dry foods some recommend oats, canary seed and millet, hemp seed and linseed. There again all seem agreed that oats are the chief diet. But mice

do love canary seed, and have caused the death of many a canary to get it. Our advice is to be sparing with the hemp and linseed—give it as a tit-bit. For soft food some recommend—most fanciers do—bread and milk. But caution is enjoined as to quantity. Some give boiled rice, some one thing, some another. As green food, many of the common weeds are recommended. Dandelion leaves, white flowering chickweed, groundsel, garden lettuce, watercress, carrot, potato, etc., are also given. Mr. Hamlin says:—"My usual diet is as follows—For morning feed, give about a tablespoonful of plain canary seed, changing it occasionally for white millet seed. This is all that is required for the morning. For the evening meal I give a handful of the best oats it is possible to buy, and sometimes, just as a treat, I give a piece of Osborne biscuit. About three times a week I give bread and milk. The best thing to do when giving this latter is to get the bread as stale as possible, cut it up into small pieces about the size of a walnut, and pour the water over it. When it is properly soaked squeeze out the water and pour a little milk over it. But even then I always squeeze the milk out again, as it does not give it to the mice in too sloppy a state. If you do so, it makes their coats loose. Of course, in the summer time it does not hurt to give them a few blades of grass, which they greatly enjoy." We may just add here, that the first thing to remember in feeding mice is that they need to be fed regularly and as punctually to time as possible. To the casual observer this may not seem of importance, but it is true, nevertheless.

BREEDING.

It is always advisable when breeding mice—it does not matter what variety you go in for—to have the best bred stock you can get. It may be a little more expensive on the first outlay, but the breeder will find that it is cheaper in the end. Not only so, but it saves a lot of time which would otherwise be occupied in the task of breeding out defects which are generally to be found in second rate stock. Often we have heard men say they could buy this or that specimen at such a price—usually a ridiculously low one. We wait a while,

and it is certain that these self same people very soon find out their error and the difficulties that they have to meet and overcome. It is a hard enough task for the experienced breeder to get rid of defects, and it is not always safe for him to be making experiments either. What then are the risks run by the inexperienced? What we advise is—make up your mind what variety you would like to go in for. We always recommend beginners to start in one variety only. You will find it to your advantage to do so, in many ways. In the first place, if you have a few of one variety you are the better able to concentrate your attention upon them. Let it be clearly understood that no breeder will succeed who does not give his or her mind to it, and master all the details necessary to thoroughly understanding the variety selected. If you keep a number of different varieties, there is no concentration, and a division of interest which must inevitably bring failure. Select a variety you most admire. Nail the motto “Excelsior” up in your mousery. Then go to a breeder who has also made a name by successfully exhibiting that variety. Buy a pair, or three—say a buck and two does. Do not be hasty in your selection of a person to buy from. Study well the show reports, and remember that it is not always the person who wins the largest challenge cup who is the most successful breeder. Sometimes persons win very high honours at one show, and are not heard of again for some time, so do not buy the first cheap winner you see advertised. Winners are not always bred from winners. At starting do not buy old stock, but select them from 10 to 16 weeks old, as this gives you a chance to breed a few litters before age creeps on them. Mice are old at 12 months. Some breeders advise that all stock over 12 months old be killed. Do not buy your stock from here, there, and everywhere, but stick to your selected strains, and be careful in the selection of your own breeding stock. If you like buy three does in young, mated as the breeder you have gone to had mated them for himself. We mean this—buy three does he knows breed the right stuff. Give him a good price for such. If you buy a buck and two does, pair them up, and when you find your does in young, take the buck away. When the young ones arrive, let them alone until they are four or five days old,

and then select what you think are likely to be the best coloured or the best marked ones. Weed out and destroy the weaklings and the wastrels, leaving the doe to rear say three, but certainly not more than four. It is impossible for a doe to do justice by a litter of 9 or 10 (sometimes a dozen) so well as she can three. If you want size in your mice you must never let a doe rear more than three or four. Always bear in mind that you want to breed for quality, not quantity. Keep only the very best. Inferior ones are of no use to anyone, and yet they cost just as much to keep as first-class specimens. The period of gestation in mice is from 18 to 21 days. It is astonishing at what an early age mice will begin to breed. They have been known to breed at eight weeks old, and the young bucks will sire young at 5 or 6 weeks old. Small wonder that mice multiply so quickly. Does, when at mature age can be kept together, but bucks usually fight each other to the death. Weed out the bucks, and keep only the cream of them. Fourteen weeks old is about the time to begin to breed from mice.

EXHIBITING.

In this matter do not be afraid to send to a show with an extensive classification. The more limited this is the less chance you stand of getting in the prize list. Mixed classes are always harder to win in than those for a specified variety. The first thing to do is to obtain schedules of the shows in various centres. Select your show, and make your entry on the form usually sent for the purpose with the schedule. Be watchful in this matter, and mind you enter as per schedule. Let your entries go off in time. It helps the secretary, and sets your mind at rest. Be sure, if you don't want to sell your specimen, to put a really prohibitive price on it. It is doubly incumbent on an exhibitor to be careful how he fills up his entry paper, as, whatever mistakes he may make cannot be set right afterwards. Put sawdust, or some prefer bran, in the show cages, and a nice supply of soft, sweet and good hay. It is as well to cut this up before putting it in the cages, so that it will not be so bulky and curly. Don't stint the supply. Also see that enough food is sent in the cage to last until the mouse gets home again, as it frequently happens that

mice do not get fed at a show. Oats and seeds should be put in. Put a piece of soft food—say bread soaked in milk and the milk squeezed out again—in the cage when starting the mouse out to a show. You will want a travelling box made to take say two, four, six, eight, or more cages; and this box must be well ventilated, but so as to avoid draught. Be sure that the travelling box is securely fastened, and the labels placed right. A great point with reference to exhibition stock is condition. It is throwing money away to exhibit mice when out of coat or low in flesh, or unwell. What is wanted is a short, sleek, shiny, flying coat. By this latter is meant a coat that will, if turned back the wrong way, fly into its place instantly, and look as smooth and sleek again as if it had never been ruffled. This can only be secured by keeping the stock in health and well and properly fed.

DISEASES.

ASTHMA.

Mice, like all other animals, are subject to disease. A great deal of this springs from overcrowding or over-feeding. If these conditions are absent, they are generally pretty free from disease. One of their diseases is denoted by the presence of a kind of whistling or singing. This is in reality Asthma. It is miserable to the breeder to hear it, and almost impossible to cope successfully with it. The disease will often be set up by reason of the mice being kept in a draughty place. If they do start wheezing, take the matter in hand in time. Remove the affected ones from out all draughts, keep them warm and cosy, and give them a pinch or two of linseed, and possibly a little hemp would do them no harm. You may thus be able to check it, but if they get very bad it is best to destroy the sufferers. Mice are very hard to doctor for this or, indeed, any disease, but for Asthma it may be found beneficial to sprinkle a few drops of the oil of eucalyptus on the bottom of the cage, and add a little glycerine to the bread and milk. There is a recipe for colds which is held by Mr. H. J. Spiers, of Brighton Road, Birmingham, which is very efficacious in the case of colds in rabbits, cats and even dogs.

We have proved the value of this mixture amongst all three, and see no reason why, with care, it should not be applied in the case of mice. Another trouble which visits the Mousery is

SKIN DISEASE.

This is generally similar to what is known as eczema in dogs and other animals, and is the most common affection known to mice. It should be treated by stopping all stimulating foods and adding a little flowers of sulphur or magnesia to the soft food. It is best to isolate all cases, and the bare or scurvy-like places on the skin may be treated every day with Spiers' "Perfection" eczema ointment, or with vaseline and flowers of sulphur mixed. Care should be taken in the use of the ointment, as the mice are sure to lick it off, although if they do it would do no actual harm; what is intended is that they may get an overdose of relaxing medicine this way. If they should do so, however, the ultimate effect will be to aid in clearing the blood, even if it leads to distress. Next in order comes

EAR CANKER,

And a very irritating affection it is, causing acute itching, and often severe pain. It is hard to treat, simply because the mice scratch out almost any dressing that is applied, and this makes the irritation worse. Treat internally as for eczema, and if possible mop out the ears by the aid of a little piece of cotton wool on a thin stick, having dipped the wool in warm water. Then dust flowers of sulphur in the ears, alternately with a spot or two of glycerine. A kind of epidemic has of late broken out amongst mice upon which we have been questioned in our journalistic capacity. It is what we shall call

LOSS OF SMELLERS.

Young mice have been born without them, and the smellers of the adult mice have dropped off. Mr. Spiers, who has had considerable experience in the treatment of diseases, and the preparation of veterinary medicines says:—"I have never had this complaint

amongst my mice, but I should say the best treatment is to rub the place with a mixture of equal parts cocoanut oil and white paraffin, holding the patient till the solution is dry; or, better still, cocoa-nut oil and vaseline." Overshown mice develop

ABSCESSES AND TUMOURS.

These are very hard to treat, as mice cannot be usually kept quiet while an operation is performed, although a fancier has been known to succeed even in this. With the help of a friend he chloroformed the mouse (a prize winner) and removed the growth. But the operation is very risky. Mr. Spiers writes:—"A friend of mine says he had a mouse with an abscess. He fomented it with hot water, causing it to break. Then he squeezed out the pus, the mouse keeping quiet all the time. A growth can often be dispersed in its earlier stages by painting the affected part with iodine, but great care must be used." Much can be done in the way of

PREVENTION OF DISEASE

By a timely and regular prescribing of blood cooling medicine. A mild aperient, such as magnesia, is excellent once a week, and often prevents mischief. A mixture of four parts flowers of sulphur and one part cream of tartar, too is a very cooling and blood purifying aperient. Do not overdo it, and do not overcrowd. Especially be careful to isolate when disease is observed, and disinfect.



CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCIPAL VARIETIES.

In order to secure the most up-to-date experience, apart from our own knowledge, of the several varieties, their points, and the best way to breed them, we have invited the views of two or three of our leading fanciers and judges of mice. We shall again quote from Mr. Hamlin. He says:—"There are twenty-seven recognized varieties of mice, but I shall only deal with those of which I have had practical experience, viz., self colours. By that I mean those wholly of one colour. First I will explain the different colours. They are black, chocolate, fawn, white, cream, black-eyed silvers, blues, and pink-eyed silvers. These constitute the self-colours. To start with, I shall take

BLACKS.

These are undoubtedly very pretty mice, and a really good specimen will generally do a bit of winning for its owner, if shown in good trim. In blacks, the great point is to keep them pure in colour, and free from brindling or tanning on the sides, and also on the throat and vent. The colour should be dense, running right down to the feet and the end of the tail. A lot of blacks are bred with pied feet and tails, but these should not be used to breed from if it can possibly be avoided. To anyone starting in blacks I advise going to a breeder who makes a speciality of the variety. He is sure to keep stock that has been black bred for generations. Ask him for a hint or two as to the stock, and how to proceed. You will not go far wrong." Very often blacks are mated to blues—i.e., pure blues, with good results. The progeny, if both are soundly

bred will be blacks and blues, and these should be intensified in colour. If you mate a blue buck to a black doe, save a pure coloured black buck and mate him to a blue doe. By this means you will stamp in the colours, and you will find, as is the case in Dutch rabbits, it will enhance the colours of each. Do not introduce grey blood, be it ever so dark. You will get a nasty colour in that way, and troublesome white hairs. In introducing blues amongst your blacks, it is best to use dark dense blues, but pure in colour. We will next allude to

CHOCOLATES.

"These should be of a rich dark shade, as nearly as possible the colour of a piece of chocolate. They are occasionally paired to blacks to improve the chocolate colour, but the reverse should not be indulged in if you wish to retain your blacks in purity. Therefore do not keep the blacks from such litters, as those bred from blacks and chocolates are sure to be of a rusty tinge. It is really best, if you once get your chocolates to a good deep pure colour, to pair chocolate to chocolate, always taking care to select the richest coloured ones to breed from, on both sides." So says Mr. Hamlin.

FAWNS.

Some fanciers hold that these should be called orange, not fawn, and there is a good deal of force in the contention, for some of the deeper coloured fawns are a distinct orange in tint, and the tone of colour is present in all fawns in a greater or less degree. "If they are a good deep colour," says Mr. Hamlin, "they are really orange, and I don't think fawn is a proper name for them." This, of course, is a matter of opinion. A really good specimen of the fawn requires a great deal of breeding. They should be of a very rich colour—the deeper and brighter the better. If they are deep and yet dull in colour their beauty is not seen like it is on a bright coloured one. Fawns have a tendency to put on fat, consequently get unshapely, which is a bad fault. It very often happens, moreover, that the fat ones are the best coloured, and therefore fatness should not cause them to be wholly discarded by a

judge, as colour is, after all the chief point. It is difficult to prevent some mice getting fat, do what you will. Some will put on flesh on the most spare feeding. When breeding fawns it is always best to keep the richest coloured ones, and mate them together, always endeavouring to keep them as shapely as possible.

BLUES.

These, when of a good medium shade, are really a fascinating variety in point of colour. The standard for blue mice requires that in colour they shall as nearly as possible resemble that of a new slate. However, as is the case with some of the other self-colours, blues vary much in point of shade. For instance, some are light, some medium, and some are dark in shade. But when once you get them to a good medium shade they will breed very true to colour. The best way to proceed is to procure a pair that have been blue bred for several generations. From these you will be the most likely to breed blue mice fit for the show bench. "There ought to be no difficulty in this," says Mr. Hamlin, and he adds:—"Of course, should it happen that you get some that are too dark, I advise crossing them with black-eyed silvers. That is—pair the dark blue does to the silver buck, and select the blues from the litters. After that, you could pair blue to blue again, always remembering to keep the most level coloured ones."

BLACK-EYED SILVERS.

These, when of a light shade, are very pretty. They have probably originated from blues,—perhaps from a cross between chocolate and blue. The reason for this conjecture is that some of the black-eyed silvers, if too dark, look like a bad coloured chocolate. This difficulty can always be got over by selecting the lightest from the litters and breeding from them. There are also the

PINK-EYED SILVERS.

It is difficult to tell exactly how these originated. They are sweetly pretty, and present day judges of mice seem to prefer them to the black-eyed ones. This is

natural, as the pink eye, especially if it can be got to a real ruby shade, adds materially to the beauty of the mouse. There should be no difficulty in getting them with pink eyes. If you have black-eyed ones, get a pink-eyed buck and mate to a black-eyed doe. The result from the first cross will probably be all black-eyed ones. Pair these, brother to sister, and most likely you will get pink-eyed silvers. Last, but not least, of the self-colours, come the old and well-known

WHITES.

There is not a lot to breed for in these. The chief things that are required are purity of colour and size and shape. The coat should be short, a remark that applies to all varieties, for the shorter the coat the better, and they should have rich ruby red eyes. A word upon this point. The richer the colour of the eyes, and shorter and purer in colour the coat, the ten times better chance of success. It is probable you will only get purity of body colour in the pink eyes. The presence of black eyes in a white is indicative of the presence of dark blood somewhere. What we like to see in the whites, as in all other varieties is, in addition to plenty of size and shape, a short, sharp, and yet velvety coat, with a good gloss on it into the bargain.

MARKED VARIETIES.

Mr. F. Perrin, of Brighton, one of the most popular judges of fancy mice, writes:—"The variety which finds most favour is the 'Broken.' But what a name! It was the correct name when the mouse Fancy was in its infancy, and was meant to signify that any mouse which was not a self colour was a 'broken,' or rather a 'Broken colour.' It is time the governing bodies of the mouse fancy devised names suitable for the various breeds which have made so much headway in recent years. Several of the present names are not at all suitable."

THE "BROKEN COLOUR."

This breed may have any number of distinct spots or patches—the greater the number the better, and may

be of any colour. To Mr. Perrin's mind, they should as nearly as possible resemble a Dalmatian dog. In former years the "Broken" coloured mouse was simply Dutch-marked, with spots on the body, but that is not the sort of mouse sought after to-day. Some well-known winners of to-day are spoilt by having head and saddle marking, although the body patches are well-nigh perfect. The same remarks apply to the variegated mice. These should be separate, and it should be made perfectly clear that mice with cheek-markings and saddles would have to go behind those with patches, even though the patches were not so numerous. If this were done, breeders would set to work to produce an imitation of the Dalmatian or an unevenly patched mouse, which would be a distinct and taking exhibit. The patches should be about the size of a large pea, and be placed indiscriminately about the mouse. The variety which seems to show the greatest contrast to the unevenly spotted is

THE VARIEGATED,

Because the markings of this variety are just the reverse of the spotted. In the spotted variety the patches must be of exceptionally sound colour, i.e., no white hairs in the coloured patches, but with the variegated, the more the coloured hairs are intermixed with the white the better. They must be brindled from the tip of the nose to the tail, and not have any solid patches of colour upon them. Preference should be given to mice without the slightest trace of blaze, cheek-markings, or saddle. There should be no solid patches of colour upon the flanks or belly. The variety, however, is not very extensively bred, although they are not quite so difficult to breed as the spotted ones.

DUTCH-MARKED.

These are one of the most difficult varieties to breed true to standard. A Dutch rabbit is the ideal which all breeders try to attain, but a Dutch-marked mouse will never be bred to look the same as a Dutch rabbit. The shape of the blaze can never be so perfect on a mouse, because its ears are so wide apart, and that does not lend

itself to the formation of the beautiful wedge-shaped blaze found on a Dutch rabbit. The saddle and undercut are two very important markings, and there is growing evidence of vast improvement in these points. The feet stops are another very difficult marking to fix, but progress is being made, and attention must be directed to the prevention of brindling, and soundness of ear colour.

THE EVENLY-MARKED MOUSE

Is very closely related to the Dutch-marked, and Mr. Perrin thinks a great many fanciers breed those two varieties together owing to their similarity of head and saddle markings. Even-marks can be bred, and they will breed true to markings. "A few years ago," says Mr. Perrin, "I knew a certain fancier who made these his special study, and although he started with chance-bred evens, after a few months careful breeding he began to breed some very well balanced five-patched evens. This goes to prove that the winners of this variety are not always 'flukes.'"

TRICOLOURS, OR SABLE AND WHITES.

A very great improvement has been made in this variety this year, and the colours of the specimens—black, chocolate and white, are very distinct. Any mouse possessing three or more distinct colours ought to take preference over the ordinary sable and white, because the fawn generally shades off from a dark grey patch, and when these are shown at their best, they are very taking. The worst fault in sable and white mice is that the colours change so often, but probably, as a result of judicious mating with other breeds the colours will become fixed. As soon as this is accomplished, many more fanciers will take up the variety. A tri-colour mouse, Mr. Perrin thinks, "should resemble a tortoise and white cavy, and the patches should be square and clean cut. No doubt some will say that this is 'too previous,' but if we know what the 'ideal' is, it will be much better, because we can mate and arrange our stock with the hope of coming near to the ideal. At present it does not matter how they are

marked, or what colours, therefore fanciers keep breeding away in a haphazard fashion in the hope that something startling may turn up. We are encouraging this style of breeding by not fixing standards."

TORTOISEHELLS AND TORTOISESHELL AND WHITES.

Are about as few and far between as are big diamonds in the possession of an East London seamstress. It is said that a real well-broken tortoiseshell has not yet been exhibited; and only one or two tortoiseshell and whites, so that the only thing to be said about this variety is—there is a good field open to the mouse breeder to obtain the rare in his fancy. We cannot tell him how to do it.

SILVERS GREYS.

These are another puzzling variety to the mouse breeder. We mean on the score of production. It is well, however, to tell them that a real and genuine silver grey is not a black mouse with white tipped hairs intermixed. Silver grey never yet was of a black cast of colour, but of a blue tone. The undercolour should be blue black, not black, and the ticking and silvering, i.e., the dark and light tips intermixed, should leave a blue tone of colour to catch the eye of the observer. They will never be got the correct shade by merely crossing whites with blacks. A silver grey rabbit, when it first runs about is not a jet black, but if the fur is well examined, it will be found to be blue black. Such will have to be the case with a silver grey mouse, if bred to perfection. It is of no use breeders of mice labouring under the delusion that the ground colour of the silver grey is black. The most likely way to breed a silver grey mouse is, we think to persist in crossing a grey agouti buck to a light coloured blue doe, especially if the doe shows any inclination to silver hairs. We should mate the densest coloured blue buck to a really good black-eyed silver doe, and save any blue does from the progeny that might show silvering. To these mate the grey agouti buck. We do this to stamp in the blue.

SILVER FAWNS.

These are got by mating self silvers to fawns and vice versa, and crossing in and in. Don't go too far in this way, but bring in a fresh fawn doe now and again.

SILVER BROWNS.

We notice that this is one of the red hot pokers to the theorist, and he leaves it severely alone. A silver brown possesses several different shades of colour in its coat. It should be of a chestnut tone of colour, as it catches the eye, not a blue tone. These latter are wastrels in the rabbit Fancy. Consequently, if you blow up the fur, you will see black and silver hairs, chestnut, and also a blue bottom. They should be silvered and ticked as sharply as the greys, but of quite a different tone of colour. There is no doubt that silver brown rabbits have been got by the use of the silver fawn buck and the Belgian doe, and perhaps vice versa. This would point to the use of the silver fawn mouse, and the golden agouti. Try it.

SABLES.

These are divided into two, at least, if not three sections, i.e., medium and dark. But the difficulty with sables, even if obtained, is that they so soon go off. They are as bad as Himalayan rabbits or lizard canaries; they are only mice of a day.

AGOUTIS.

There are golden agoutis and grey. The former are, or should be, of a rich—very rich—golden colour as a groundwork, and there should be a fairly plentiful interspersion of black hairs. The greys should have silvery grey substituted for the golden colour. The ticking should be well carried on to the feet and the cheeks, jowl, and throat if possible. There are breeders of the former, but very few of the latter, and if you are going in for this variety buy of the recognised breeder and get his advice as to mating.

TANS.

Are divided into blacks and blues. The ideal is the black and blue and tan terrier dog. They are probably obtained by the crossing of blues and blacks with sables, but we should not mind pairing a golden agouti buck in a blue or black doe, and then reversing the order in the young a time or two just for a trial. If you get foul hairs you must mate and re-mate the clearest in the black or blue to get rid of them. At present the tans shown are very far from the standard. What is wanted is a black or a blue, dense and trebly glossy, with tan markings along the edge of the belly, up the chest, on the nostrils—not the nose, on the inside rims of the ears, along the jowl end, all down the insides of the hind feet, in a ring round each eye, on each toe of the fore feet, well under the belly, and in the form of a triangle at the neck, behind the ears. The denser the tan the better.

There may be other colours in mice that we have missed, but it is enough to feel that all or any of the above-mentioned can be bred systematically and to a state of perfection.

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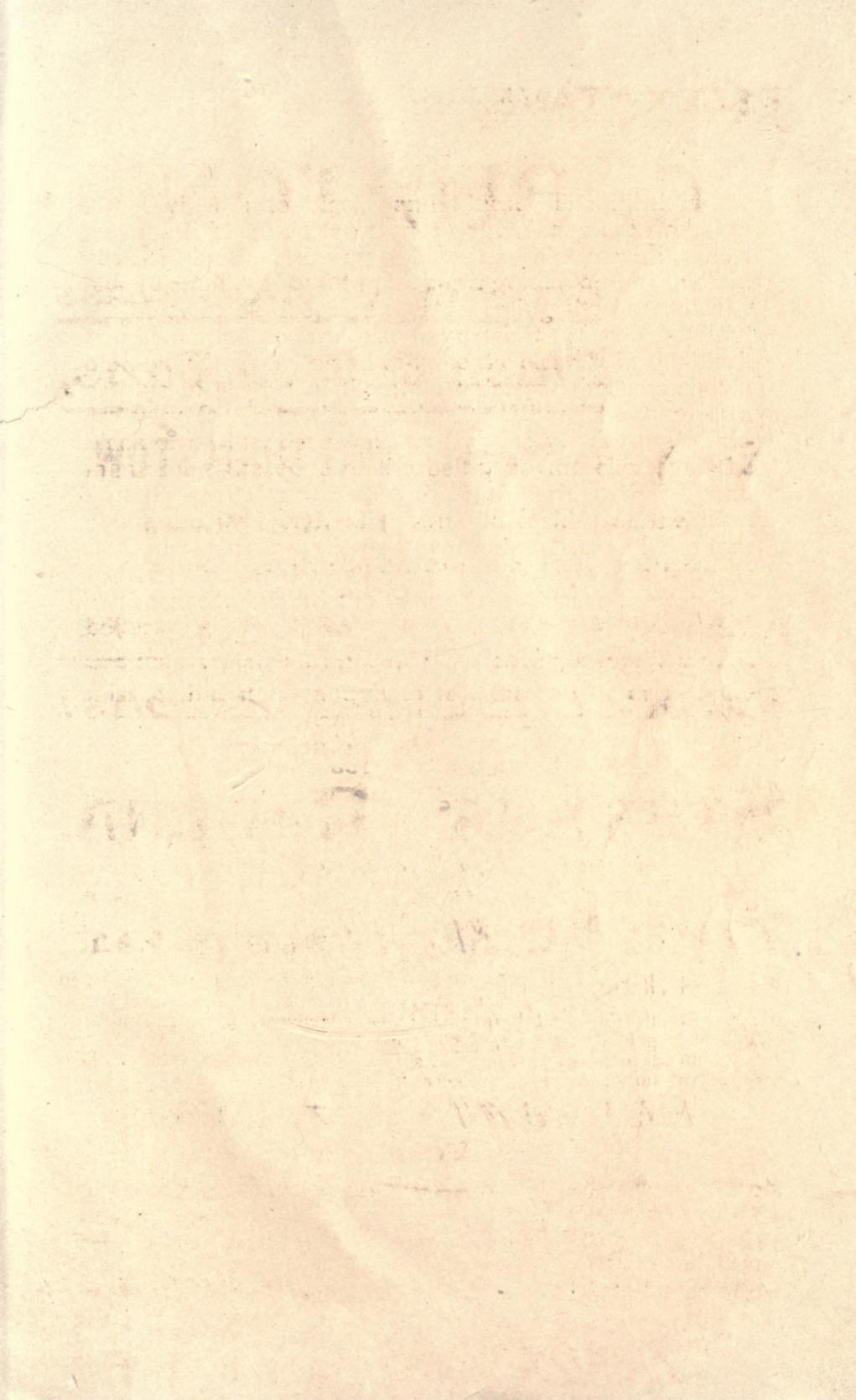
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